# MYSTERY MAGAZINE

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*Featuring*

**COUNTERFEIT CLUES** *by*

CHARLES FULTON OURSLER

# MYSTERY MAGAZINE

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# A Friendly Chat

WE have received quite a number of suggestions from our readers for the improvement of this magazine. Some have asked for a serial story, others think larger type would look better, another wants more illustrations, and a fourth is anxious to read a story containing a female detective. We intend to give our readers exactly what they want, so look out for added improvements in the future. Every one who has written to us express themselves pleased with the wonderful change we have made in this publication, and the circulation has increased so much that we are satisfied the magazine is liked by all who read it. This is very gratifying and has impelled us to redouble our efforts to get better stories and more interesting articles for each issue. Our sole aim is to please you in every way we can think of. Consequently we have secured another batch of wonderfully good stories for the next issue.

The feature is entitled "The Cross" and is the work of that gifted author, W. S. Ingram. It is a detective story of quality and shows how a crook may be haunted by a symbol of his crime. Charles T. Jordan has written an interesting story of the underworld called "The Flaw In the Frame-up." The little gem "A Cry in the Night," by Edgar Daniel Kramer, will please you, and the police story, "The Clean-up," by Dustin Mack, is one of those gripping tales that rivet your attention from the beginning. Julian Kilman contributes one of his best efforts in "The Jest," and O. W. Simons has added another of his wierd mystery stories to the series under the title of "A Chance Choice." In addition to these specials, there will be a splendid collection of articles on various subjects, queer happenings from all over the world, and a mass of short items of general interest.

Don't miss the next issue, as it is one of the best we have ever published. We will soon announce the winners of the prize contest which began in No. 95.

THE EDITOR.

# COUNTERFEIT CLUES

by *Charles Fulton Oursler*

## CHAPTER ONE

### LIKE A BAT IN THE AIR

THE night that Delyse Gordon first told her story to Dr. Leonard Lynx, he was playing chess with Jeremiah.

In all America there was at that time no greater mystery than Dr. Leonard Lynx. A scientist of the most profound accomplishment, he resigned all the various claims upon his attention, even a pressing invitation for a conference with certain royal persons at Buckingham Palace, took up rooms in an old flathouse in Chelsea, and became a recluse. The public wondered, but not until years later did they learn the truth—that Doctor Lynx had suddenly become enthusiastic about criminology, especially that branch of it relating to the detection of criminals. Not until he had cleared up the mystery which Delyse Gordon brought him that night did the world know the real purpose of his singular seclusion.

And Delyse Gordon? The American public has not yet forgotten her — the "Divine Delyse" they called her, the most seraphic contralto of the century, more beautiful than the Empress Eugenie! Across the artistic horizon of America she flashed like a meteor, and it was amid the splendid brilliance of her career that she came to the cheap flat of Doctor Lynx in Old Chelsea, that night when he was about to checkmate Jeremiah.

Jeremiah? You shall learn all about him in due time.

It was one of those cold, wet nights in mid-autumn, when the gusts romp cruelly from out the shadows of dark old buildings on West Twenty-third street; when the freezing rain makes the car-tracks glitter in the chill radiance of the arcs, and the asphalt gleams with the dull mirroring of old varnish beneath the lamps in late shop windows. Against the unshuttered windows of Doctor Lynx's second-story front room the pattering raindrops pelted, as if jealous of the quiet ease of the two men bent across the chessboard on their knees. The wind rattled the panes, as if eager to spoil their calm enjoyment; as if it would twist and torture and put to final rout the up-curling wreathes of smoke from the doctor's pipe.

"It's a fine night for a murder, I'm thinking!" muttered Jeremiah, moving his king.

As if fate had heard and accepted his suggestion, there came a furtive tap at the door, thrice repeated.

"Come in!" said Doctor Lynx.

The door was opened by the landlady, an inquisitive soul, whose face now was wrinkled with an intense spasm of curiosity.

"A lady to see you, sir," she said. "She wouldn't give her name, she wouldn't. But she said it was urgent."

Doctor Lynx looked at his watch; it lacked half an hour to midnight. Why should a woman come to see him at such an hour?

"Show her in," he said briskly, tenderly lifting the chessboard, that its arrangement might not be disturbed, and placing it carefully on the bed. Jeremiah rose hastily to go, but the doctor, with a gesture, bade him remain in his seat. They rose a moment later, as the mysterious lady appeared before them in the doorway.

Small wonder that a startled gasp came from the untutored Jeremiah, or that the well-regulated heart-beats of the scientist bounded a trifle faster. Such a vision of regal beauty seldom comes in an unexpected visit to one's cheap flat in Old Chelsea near to the midnight hour. The woman was imperiously tall, and her attitude, as she stood there, wrapped in an ermine cape, a glittering tiara of precious baubles above her white brow, suggested royalty. She etched upon their minds a picture of such beauty, of such loveliness, that time could never wear away. Her face, as she turned toward them in that first glimpse, was regal in its classic lines, the dark beauty of her olive skin, the languorous glow of her wide and startled eyes, the cascade glory of her black hair, was utterly overpowering. For a moment neither Doctor Lynx nor Jeremiah could speak.

"Good-evening, Doctor Lynx," she said simply, her well-modulated voice stirring them from their daze. "Have you forgotten me?"

Forgotten her? Impossible! He hastened to assure her of that; he drew her into the room and placed his best chair for her near the crackling logs of the open hearth; he was eager to know if the nerve trouble for which he had treated her, some years before, had ever returned; he was delighted to know that it had not; he suggested a glass of forbidden wine, after the bleak chill of the night.

Madame refused the wine. She had been singing "Azucena" in "Il Trovatore," and her chauffeur had driven her down from the Metropolitan; she was not tired. But—with a swift glance at Jeremiah—she had come to consult Doctor Lynx on a matter of the utmost privacy, and had been at some pains to find him. Understanding her meaning, Jeremiah again sought to retreat.

But Doctor Lynx interposed.

"Jeremiah is my chauffeur," he explained, as madame's eyes widened in surprise. "He is also the only man I know who can occasionally beat me at chess. In addition to that, he is my most trusted assistant in the work in which I am now engaged. You may speak freely before him."

Madame did not seem to like this, but from former experience she knew that Doctor Lynx did not often change his mind. So she charmingly acquiesced.

"You remember," she said, "that two years ago my precious tiara was stolen, and you, who were treating my nerves, offered to find it for me?"

"Do I?" laughed Doctor Lynx. "It was finding those gems, and putting 'Lightning Sam', the jewel thief, in Sing Sing, that made me decide to become a scientific detective. But I did not think that you would remember that. You shouldn't be wearing those jewels around New York like that, anyway. Have you lost some others?"

"No," she answered slowly. "I am afraid, Doctor Lynx, that you will laugh at me when I tell you I have come to see you on a terrible matter—and that I must have your help in clearing up a perfectly frightful series of mysteries!"

"Mysteries!" cried the doctor, brightening with true professional interest. "No more jewels gone, I hope."

She leaned forward, resting her chin in the cup of her hand and looking at him with startled eyes.

"I think some one is planning to commit murder in our house," she said slowly.

A moment of awed silence followed—a silence broken only by the clucked tongue of the startled Jerry. Doctor Lynx absently refilled his pipe, forgetting one shouldn't smoke black old pipes in the presence of beautiful opera singers.

"Murder!" he repeated softly. "Murder in your house? How do you mean?"

"I can explain it very briefly, doctor. My mother is dead, and I make my home with my stepfather, a man who married my widowed mother in my infancy, and who has always been as dear to me as my own father would have been. He is an extremely wealthy man, and because he objects to my stage career I plan to give it up soon. Since childhood I have lived at his home, out at Exile Bay. With us live my stepsister, Muriel, and her husband, Ronald Herson. We have all been very happy there—I think all of them are still, except myself."

She paused, seeking to subdue her very evident agitation.

"And why, my dear lady," inquired Doctor Lynx sympathetically, "are you not happy?"

"It was this way," she replied, triumphantly mastering her feelings. "I had a mysterious telephone message three weeks ago — a telephone message from some man whose drawling voice seemed oddly, vaguely familiar, and yet I could not place it. He said to me: 'Delyse, I am going to commit murder in your house. Delyse, I am going to commit murder in your house.' I was so astonished I did not know what to say, and rather foolishly, I suppose, I demanded to know what he meant. 'I mean,' he replied in the same even drawl, 'I mean that I am going to commit murder in your house in a very short time.' With that I heard the receiver click, and he was gone."

"Did you attempt to trace the call?" interrupted Doctor Lynx eagerly.

"Yes. It came from a booth in Grand Central Station."

"And was that all?"

"No. A week later he called me again. This time I had barely time to say 'Hello' when I heard his drawling voice say, 'I am going to commit murder in your house. I am going to commit murder in your house. In two weeks. Good-by.' Evidently he was afraid I might try to trace him through another wire—I did mean to—for he rang off instantly. Again I tried to trace the call, and this time it came from a drugstore on lower Broadway. It left me greatly shocked, and yet I still imagined it was only a wicked, practical joke. I searched my mind, trying to identify the voice, which was distinctly familiar, but it was reminiscent only; I could not actually place it. Perhaps it was disguised. And then—this evening, just before dinner—I heard the phone ring and something in me seemed to leap up warningly and say, 'It is he again.' Of course, I had not said anything to any one about it—I did not want to frighten any one—but I was not surprised when the servant told me some one was asking for me. It was indeed the same tormenting voice and this time he said: 'Some one in your house has but twenty-four hours left of life. Some one in your house has but twenty-four hours left of life.' And again he was gone. Since then another remarkable thing has occurred — my stepfather has received a letter on which nothing was written except the words 'The Crimson Arm,' written in red ink. But that malicious drawling threat, that dreadful repetition of a sentence that sounds like doom has quite unnerved me. I could not keep my secret any longer. I dared not tell any one in the house about it. You were the only one I could think of, and so I have come to you. Do you think it just foolish of me, doctor?"

Doctor Lynx did not immediately reply. Indeed, although his impressive countenance betrayed no sign of the sudden seething excitement which had seized him, he was looking at something, just behind the diva's chair, which was nothing less than a miracle.

The window, overlooking the street, was just a few feet in back of the chair he had given her. Between that window and the sidewalk yawned a drop of nearly forty feet. Yet flattened against the wet window pane, leering savagely in at him, was the face of a man!

An incredible thing, that face, yet palpable and real as the rain-pelted window-glass against which his huge thick nose was pressed, his black mustaches dripping the rain down in oozy trickles, his glittering eyes staring balefully at the doctor, his unshaven chin thrust forward threateningly.

A sinister, ominous face it was—menacing that little company, and it remained there,

suspended apparently, unsupported in the air, looking in upon them like a wraith, listening, watching, ready to strike!

Yet not by the flicker of an eyelid did Doctor Lynx indicate to the woman who sat before him, relating her story, the baffling enigma before him. Not by the slightest tremor of his voice did he alarm her. He turned lazily to Jeremiah and said:

"Jerry, old man, will you get me the papers in that tiara robbery?"

Jerry understood, though the startled madame Delyse did not. Jerry had seen that face at the window—he looked at it again, now, to indicate that he understood. And in the same moment it seemed to melt into the air, to float off in the storm like an unsubstantial shape of smoke, and disappear.

The diva, intent on relating her story, could not understand why Doctor Lynx should send away his assistant to get papers on a robbery case that was completed. But Doctor Lynx was satisfied to have her wonder at that. He knew that the trusted Jeremiah was galloping down the stairs, ready to chase the phantom face and make it prisoner—if that were possible.

Doctor Lynx smiled reassuringly at Madame Delyse.

"Your stepfather's name?" he asked her.

"Eldridge Gordon," she replied. "I have taken his name, you see, in my professional work, but now I have promised to give up my career because it annoys him so. My mother married him shortly after my own father died."

"I see. How old a man is he?"

"I think Mr. Gordon is nearly seventy."

"Well! I was beginning to ask questions a bit too soon, I am afraid. What do you expect me to do about all this?"

"I want you to come to our house, Doctor Lynx, and protect us all from that mysterious man—I know he intends to keep his word!"

"I shall be glad to do that. To-morrow, he indicated, eh? Well, to-morrow morning I shall drive out with Jerry and visit you, pretending to be a musical manager anxious to put you in concert. How will that do?"

"Splendid," madame assured him. "And do you think me foolish?"

"You were right to seek advice," answered the doctor, "but I imagine it to be some senseless attempt at joking. Now for one or two more questions. What was your stepfather's business?"

"Steamships."

"And," added the scientist dryly, "who will inherit his wealth?"

"His only daughter, Muriel, who married Ronald Herson. He has no other kith or kin. I am no relation to him at all—he merely married my mother, and never legally adopted me."

"I see. Who would inherit the money in the event of Mrs. Herson's death?"

"Her cousin, Billy Gordon, who is around the place just now. He is a sort of black sheep, a wanderer over the face of the earth. He arrived about three weeks ago; the first time he had been heard from in nine years. He had served with the British troops in Africa during the war, I believe."

"I see," said Doctor Lynx thoughtfully. "I think that is all to-night, then; thanks, madame. Go home and sleep well. There is nothing really to worry about, and I shall see you at eleven to-morrow morning. I heard your car arrive before you were announced; may I see you down to it?"

The detective saw her safely lodged within the luxurious recesses of her sedan and driven away. Glancing quickly up and down the almost deserted streets, he gave a sharp little whistle, and Jerry Murphy stepped out of the shadowy doorway of a nearby delicatessen shop.

Jerry at first did not speak. He merely pointed at the flat brownstone front of the house where Doctor Lynx lived.

"Take a look at it, will ye?" insisted the irate Jerry. "Flat as a pancake, now, ain't it? How the divil did that walrus-faced creature git up there and look in that window? Look at it, will you. He couldn't get up or he couldn't get down without breaking his neck? What do you make of that?"

A strange glint was in Doctor Lynx's eyes as he replied:

"You heard part of the story Madame Gordon told me? Three times she has been called to the telephone and in her ear was spoken a threat of murder! A queer business, Jerry, eh? Since when have murderers taken to ad-

vertising their plans like that, except in novels? And that face at the window—flattened against the brick wall like a bat? I hope the 'Divine Delyse' will sleep this night—I tried to calm her, poor soul—but I fear we will have our hands full to-morrow."

Together the two men mounted the worn carpeted stairs in silence. As they entered the room the telephone, resting on the tabouret beside the bed, set up an insolent tingling.

"Helloa!" shouted Doctor Lynx.

"Helloa!" drawled an unfamiliar voice in his ears. "The Gordon house is marked for murder, and you can't stop it! The Gordon house is marked for murder and you can't stop it!"

Click!

The mysterious gentleman with the drawling voice had replaced the receiver!

---

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE CRIMSON ARM

A LONELY road leads from a main-traveled highway of upper Long Island, through a curiously twisting ribboned route, to the entrance of the estate of Eldridge Gordon, where dwelt the 'Divine Delyse,' and the other members of her family of whom she had spoken in her interview with Doctor Lynx.

It is a curiously contrived estate, bordering on the three shores of a jagged inlet from the Sound which had gained for itself the name of Exile Bay. No part of this strip of water was visible to outsiders, unless they ventured near in boats, for the land of the Gordon place surrounded Exile Bay like the three dimensions of the letter V. The house stood facing the Sound at what would be the bottom of the V, its lawn dipping gently to the beach.

Doctor Lynx's first glimpse of the house was not prepossessing. It was a foggy day, with occasional cold drizzles; the nastiness of the night before lingered like a drunken debauch of nature, and the gaunt trees shuddering in the wind, the mists hanging over but failing to soften the extreme rectangularity of the dull-bricked house, contributed to an unnatural feeling of depression which the scientist-detective brought with him on his visit, in addition to Jeremiah Murphy. The doctor attributed his feelings to indigestion and the sleep he had lost while lying awake considering Delyse Gordon and her mysterious telephone tormenting. He was not an imaginative man; his nature was too scientifically inclined for moon-webbing or star-weaving, yet he was conscious of a distinct sense of depression as he was admitted into the wide hall and greeted by the "Divine Delyse."

She met him with a kind of hectic effusiveness that he penetrated at once. Nervousness had denied her sleep; she had spent the night in tossing and apprehension; now she was on the ragged edge of hysteria.

"My dear madame," he said, "there are a great many things I should like to inquire about — about contracts, you understand," he added meaningly. "Where can we talk?"

"James will show you your room," she replied, indicating a sour-faced, gray-haired ancient retainer, "and when you are ready you will find me waiting in the library."

The guest chamber to which Doctor Lynx had been assigned was on the third floor, over the main entrance and commanding a perfect view of the waters of Exile Bay, with the yellow shore line and close-bordering green firs and cedars near by. The doctor gave but a cursory glance through the windows. He crossed the room swiftly, looked rapidly up and down the hall, closed the door, and then motioned the owl-eyed Jerry to be quiet.

Then he sat down to a small writing desk, took out a notebook and wrote rapidly across a sheet and ripped it out. This he passed to Jerry, and the assistant solemnly read it twice through.

This was what Doctor Lynx had written:

"Get below stairs and mingle with the servants. Make up to them gently. Get all the gossip of the house, the family, its friends, its traditions, its superstitions — everything you can grab quickly. Keep it in your head until I ask for it, but *get it!*"

Jerry read this through twice, and then gravely put it in his mouth, chewed it and

swallowed it—all without change of expression.

"Now, Jerry," said Doctor Lynx in a conversational tone, "I won't need you for an hour or so. If you are so hungry, why don't you go down to the kitchen and meet the cook?"

"Begad, and I'll do that," replied Jerry and departed.

Doctor Lynx did not immediately follow. Instead he lighted his pipe and smoked reflectively, staring unseeingly at the drear spectacle of nature spread beyond the veil of mist that hung about the house like a caul. Something was still puzzling him; something remained yet unsettled in his mind, as he emptied the dottle of his pipe in the fireplace and left the room.

As he was descending the staircase, Doctor Lynx was halted by the sound of hushed yet excited voices. Remembering his purpose in coming to this place, remembering the threat of murder that brooded about Exile Bay and its inhabitants, the detective felt no qualms in stopping short and listening.

Two voices he had heard, a man's and a woman's, but the woman's voice was now broken into short, dry sobs and only the man was articulate.

"You know you love me!" charged the man in an intense, passionate undertone. "You know you love me, you know you hate him! Why, Muriel, will you not go through this for me? Why should you hesitate?"

His voice was soft, with a faint touch of the languid Southern drawl to its eager, mellow tones. Somehow it sounded reminiscent, yet Doctor Lynx was not sure that he had ever heard it before.

"No! I cannot do it. Think of what it would mean if we were——"

Her words were smothered into silence, as if the man had crushed her in an embrace. For several moments there was silence.

Doctor Lynx had already located the place whence the sound had come—a room on the second floor just below the foot of the staircase which he was descending. The door was closed, but the transom had been blown open a trifle, and through this aperture he had heard. Instantly he reflected that this conversation, this clandestine love-making, might have some serious portent in connection with the shadow that overlay the place, or that it might again be utterly unrelated. But Doctor Lynx was not a man to take chances. He waited.

But he waited in vain. Moment after moment passed, and from the room there came no further sound. Incredulously Doctor Lynx looked at his watch. Five minutes had gone. He strode down the stairs, being careful not to make his footsteps too ostentatious, and resolutely turned the knob of the door.

What he wanted was a glimpse of the two whose love-making he had overheard. What he meant to say when he beheld them was an apology for the intrusion, pretending that his unfamiliarity with the household had led him into entering the wrong room.

But he got no glimpse of that pair. There was no one to whom he might tender his apologies. The room was empty—a kind of morning room it was, and its only door was the one which he had opened. Yet they were gone. The doctor stood back in bewilderment.

There already was one mystery for him to solve. The cruel face at his window the evening before—was not its damnable diablerie akin to this? Where could this man and woman have escaped without his knowing when or how?

Erasing the wrinkles of perplexity from his brow by an effort, he decided to dismiss the matter from his mind for the moment, and accordingly continued his way to the first floor, where he found Delyse waiting for him in the library. With her was a slight woman, perhaps thirty years old, with babyish blue eyes and gold hair, and a slightly older man, heavy-set and with a determined and permanent scowl.

Delyse greeted him gayly.

"Mr. Lynx," she cried, adopting the prefix they had agreed upon for him in his character of a musical manager, "let me present my stepsister Mrs. Ronald Herson and her husband."

The husband acknowledged the introduction with a grim admission that he was glad to meet Mr. Lynx and offered a shaggy hand to prove it. His wife, who Doctor Lynx instantly identified as the former Muriel Gor-

don, was infinitely more gracious, smiling sweetly as she gave the visitor her hand. The detective felt how cold and lifeless it was in his grasp. But he noted more than that.

Though his manner was as urbane and composed as a musical manager's manner under such circumstances would undoubtedly have been, though his words were conventional, his glances reassuring, yet inwardly he was a very Vesuvius ready to detonate, to erupt. This soft-voiced, baby-eyed matron to whom he had just been introduced, this Mrs. Ronald Herson, this former Muriel Gordon, this stepsister of the "Divine Delyse"—this mild and shrinking little lady was undoubtedly the woman of the pair he had overheard but a few moments before! There could be no doubt of it. Her voice was unmistakable. The keen-eyed detective even detected the echo of stifled sobs in her voice, the traces of vagrant tears beneath her lashes. She was the woman!

The beetle-browed, lowering husband, a brute by the look of him—he, too, had spoken, and the detective knew on the instant that he had never heard his voice before in his life! No! He was not the man with whom she had held that guilty conversation—it had been some other man besides her husband.

Who had it been? And what was it that soft-voiced man had been urging her to do—that she was afraid to do? And who was it that had been given but twenty-four hours of life by the mysterious drawling man at the telephone?

Conversation was difficult. Doctor Lynx saw at once that Delyse was seeking to be sprightly, and he did his best to play up to her, but there was no response from either Ronald Herson or his wife. The man aroused instant dislike, ready antagonism in the detective. Surliness he wore like a shaggy skin, and a settled malice seemed to gloat in his eyes. It was plainly evident that there were strained relations between the man and his wife; nay, he did very little to conceal it, answering her shortly on the few occasions that she directly addressed him.

Thus the chiming summons of the luncheon bells came as a relief to all concerned. It also brought a new shock to the detective.

As they rose to go to table, a young man suddenly appeared in the doorway—a rather handsome young man, with restless, curling black locks, dark flashing eyes, the nose of a Greek statue, but a mouth that Doctor Lynx decided lacked firmness and self-discipline. He was dressed in a Norfolk jacket, his trousers tucked into knee-high leather boots.

"Helloa, everybody!" he cried, and then, catching sight of the stranger, he checked a jest and bowed with formal cordiality. Delyse hastened to present him.

"This is Billy Gordon," she said. "He is the wanderer of our family—hasn't been home for seven years or more. He was with the British troops in Africa during the war, got speared and is a real hero."

Doctor Lynx shook hands warmly with the gallant Billy, but while he engaged in the inevitable chatter that must follow such introductions his brain was busy again checking up on wonders and amazements.

This Mr. Billy Gordon was the missing man of the pair he had overheard!

This wanderer, this adventurer, could not conceal himself for all the suave, bland composure of his bearing. The soft languor of his voice would have proclaimed his identity from the roofs. And Doctor Lynx noticed with unrevealed amusement that marks of powder from the cheek of the demure little Mrs. Ronald Herson still faintly stained the lapel of his jacket.

What was it Delyse Gordon had told him of this man—that he would inherit the millions of the old man, if the old man were to die, and then Muriel Gordon Herson were to die.

Or, Doctor Lynx mentally supplemented, if Mrs. Ronald Gordon Herson were to be suddenly widowed and married Billy Gordon!

Again the dread question returned: What was it he was urging her to do, that she was afraid to do?

Elope? Perhaps. But in connection with the face at the window, the singular manner in which they had escaped from the room, the telephoned warnings, Doctor Lynx was inclined to view the matter more gravely.

Luncheon was a lively meal, made so by the persistent cheerfulness of Billy Gordon, who, it appeared, had been everywhere, seen everybody, done everything—"and that," he

added merrily, "pretty nearly leaves us all out of 'everys'."

After luncheon Doctor Lynx had a short conversation alone with Delyse, in which he asked her to follow certain instructions for the safety of herself and others. To her surprise, he confided to her that half a dozen of his own men were already on the grounds or secreted in various parts of the house.

"I didn't know you had such an organization," she muttered.

"In crime hunting, madame, organization is more important than anything else—except brains," he replied, and they parted.

In his room he found Jerry, fairly stewing with excitement. Jerry had news.

To begin with, he had discovered that their room was under observation. Some one had been spying on it; he had caught a glimpse of a guilty shadow darting down the hall as he returned to it a short while ago, but he had failed to catch it. Doctor Lynx nodded solemnly at that, and encouraged him to go on.

"And what's more," confided Jerry, but the doctor halted him, pushed him pad and pencil and bade him write what he had to say. Jerry looked appalled at the task, for he was no writer, but wetting the end of the pencil with his tongue, he sat down and went at the task manfully. His completed masterpiece he turned over to Doctor Lynx in half an hour. In mercy to an old friend, it is not published as he wrote it. But the gist of it was as follows:

"Dear Boss: This place is full of scandal. The black sheep of the family is Billy Gordon, who has just come back after being away for seven years. He is in love with Mrs. Herson. They were engaged to be married once, but quarreled, and that was why he ran away. Then her father insisted that she get married to Ronald Herson, who was the son of an old friend, and out of love for her father she agreed to do it. That made Delyse Gordon mad, by the way, because they say she used to be in love with Herson herself. But, anyway, everything was quiet until three weeks ago when this Billy Gordon came back home. I don't think much of his past.

"Signed, J. Murphy."

Such was the information gleaned in the kitchen by the industrious Jerry Murphy. That he considered it important, Doctor Lynx made plainly evident. He burned the note and carefully distributed the ashes. Then he sat down and for the rest of the afternoon he pondered over the domestic tangle he had uncovered.

And always his mind came back to that same central question, over and over again propounded:

'What had Billy Gordon secretly urged Muriel Herson to do—that she had been afraid to do?"

And thus the afternoon sped by and on, and the early dusk was upon them before they were aware of it. Delyse had told him it would not be necessary to dress for dinner—he made himself presentable and went downstairs.

The family was in the music room — he could hear the rippling notes of the piano and voices. As he came in, Delyse was just finishing a song.

They were all there — Delyse, Muriel and her husband, Billy Gordon, and a bald-headed, squinting old gentleman in an armchair, who Doctor Lynx felt sure at once was the head of the household, the wealthy Mr. Eldridge Gordon. He was not mistaken.

"Glad to see you," piped the old gentleman briskly. He was dressed in a rather fastidious suit, and a red rose was in his buttonhole. It seemed evident he was aping the follies of youth because he resented the constrictions of his age. Doctor Lynx decided that the old man had been a rounder in his day, and hadn't found out yet that it was evening.

"Please don't interrupt the music because I came in," pleaded Doctor Lynx. "I rarely have had the pleasure of hearing madame sing, and under these circumstances it is indeed ideal!"

It was indeed an hour of enchantment — with only a dull garnet glow from the fireplace, and with the big music room dusky and gray and mysterious with the unrelieved shadows of the November twilight.

"What shall I sing, Mr. Lynx?" asked Delyse.

"What you like best to sing," replied the detective.

Delyse turned to the piano and her fingers moved doubtfully over the keys. A few incoherent notes, then a soft, flowing accompaniment, as she sang an old *lied, "Immer Leiser Wird Mein Schlummer,"* so sad, so yearning, so delicately tragic as to pluck at the dusty heart-strings and make them throb with old sadness, to wet the eyes again with old tears.

Even the efficient steel-trap mind of Doctor Lynx underwent a temporary change. Dreams stirred in his heart, old fancies played again up and down the corridors of his soul, with elfin echoes ringing through the vague arches, under the spell of that moving music.

It was sweet, it was sad. The very shadows of the dusk seemed tender and affected.

"Grab it! Catch it! Oh, my God! *The Crimson Arm!* Quick! Ah-h!"

With a harsh chord the music ended, the frightened group rose confusedly, they started forward uncertainly in the gloom.

It was the old man, the wealthy Mr. Eldridge Gordon, who had screamed; who had writhed and twitched and flung himself about in maudlin terror in his chair, who had choked and gibed and slathered and fallen backward, unmoving ere they reached him.

"Lights!" called Doctor Lynx, and some one pressed the button that set the wall-lamps glowing. Their softened radiance disclosed what had befallen here among them as they harkened to the music of the angels.

Eldridge Gordon was dead!

That much Doctor Lynx knew from a brief examination. There was no discernible mark upon him; no trace of an assassin; what he had meant by "The Crimson Arm" Doctor Lynx could not guess. But dread prophecy was fulfilled—Eldridge Gordon was murdered!

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## CHAPTER THREE

### THE HAUNTED PHONOGRAPH

THE telephone was ringing loudly.

Amid the awful presence of recent murder, with the staring eyes of the dead man fixed upon some ghastly and invisible assassin, with the memory of his dying shriek, "Oh, my God! *The Crimson Arm!*" still echoing in their distracted minds, with the spell of the music of Delyse hushed by the crash of violent death, the tormenting tingling of the telephone bell assumed in the minds of the white-faced opera singer and the detective an astounding significance.

The frightened silence which paralyzes human beings for the first few moments of a great shock was unbroken, except for the ringing of the bell, and yet, without speaking, the arrested glances of Doctor Lynx and Delyse conveyed their message.

They believed that the man who in previous telephone conversations had so vauntingly, so boastfully, prophesied this crime was calling now to gloat over the success of his evil work. Suddenly the bell stopped ringing; the sour-faced old butler appeared in the doorway.

"A message for Madame Delyse," said the menial, casting inquisitive glances at the rigid form of his master.

Delyse glanced appealingly at Doctor Lynx, and the detective bowed in understanding.

"I will speak for her," he said, and followed the servant down the corridor to the booth set under an archway.

"Helloa!" he said bluntly.

"You couldn't stop it! You couldn't stop it! Some one near you now has less than an hour left of life. Some one near you now has less than an hour left of life!"

The strange caller rang off, and Doctor Lynx replaced the receiver, a worried look upon his face. He fully expected that the man, whoever he might be, meant thoroughly to carry out his threat. Who would he attempt next to slay? And how? And why did he insist on telephoning a warning about it? And——

A gasp of astonishment came from the detective. Rapidly he recalled his conversation over the telephone the night before. He remembered what Delyse had told him of her own talks with the man—always she had remarked on his drawl, on the Southern languor that seemed to be the chief characteristic of his voice.

The man with whom he had just spoken had no such drawl! His voice had been jagged, harsh, and excited, and there had seemed to be a foreign tang to it as well.

What could that mean? Could he identify this latest voice with the ugly, foreign face he had seen at the window of his rooms in Chelsea?

The case was getting too full of questions; Doctor Lynx felt the need for facts with which to build a theory. Buzzing in the back of his head were innumerable premises, surmises and conjectures, but he forced them back, unwilling to speculate until he had some tangible evidence on which to erect a working hypothesis.

Nothing seemed changed when he returned to the music room. They still stood in a little frightened group — Ronald Herson grim and staring; his wife, wide-eyed and tearless and haggard; Billy Gordon, his eyes gleaming and excited, his hands trembling with nervousness as he fashioned himself a cigarette; Delyse, white and her eyes filled with a great fear as she turned questioningly to Doctor Lynx as he appeared in the doorway. It seemed to him that he saw reproaches written in her gaze, as if her heart rebuked him for the failure to do what she had asked him to Exile Bay to do. Before she could address him, however, Ronald Herson spoke up:

"Why haven't we called in a doctor?" he demanded sullenly. "Maybe he isn't dead yet."

"He is quite dead," replied Doctor Lynx.

"What do you know about it?" responded Herson irritably. "Are you a physician?"

"I am!"

All except Delyse stared in amazement at this simple answer to Herson's snarling query. They gazed at Doctor Lynx with new interest.

"What—what caused it?" fluttered Muriel Herson anxiously. "Was it—heart trouble?"

"No," replied Doctor Lynx soberly. "I am more inclined to think it was just what he himself said it was."

"What was that?" they asked in chorus.

"The Crimson Arm."

After which enigmatic reply Doctor Lynx went back to the body of Eldridge Gordon and knelt beside it, putting his own face close to the face of the dead man, the wrinkled skin of which was overspread with a bluish pallor, the puckered lips crimpled into ridges and rimples, the tongue swollen and twisted, the eyeballs protruding in the throes of final agony.

For a long time Doctor Lynx remained so, stopping now and then to seize the dead flesh between thumb and forefinger—to lift up the leaden lids, to force back the jaws and stare down the throat. The others watched him with a loathing, horrified fascination. They jumped nervously as he sprang to his feet.

"It is my duty to inform you," he stated briskly, "that from this moment I speak to you, not as a guest enjoying your hospitality, but as a representative of the law of this State. I am a detective, an agent of the police, if you will, and while I have a private practise, I am fully empowered to represent the authorities—there is no conflict between us whatever."

Billy Gordon strode forward with a swagger of rather obvious bravado.

"Why do you tell us all this?" he demanded, his drawling voice holding a hint of insolence.

"Because your uncle has been murdered," returned Doctor Lynx evenly. "Because I have just been warned that another murder is to be attempted here within an hour. Because I will not rest until I have found the guilty and brought them to justice. Do you want to assist, or don't you?"

"I think we should call in the local police," persisted the young man doggedly.

"I think so too," interrupted Muriel Herson. Her husband turned on her savagely and told her to hold her tongue; this was men's business and not for her to meddle with. Doctor Lynx was not surprised that Muriel had regretted her marriage to him, and the conversation he had overheard became more understandable.

"The local police have already been called in," replied Doctor Lynx quietly. "The house is full of them, but I am afraid we have all pretty well fallen down on the job. However, I am here to assure you that your objections to my procedure are not important. I am in charge here, and you will do what I say—if for no other reason than to prevent the blunders which will happen if you have uniformed men coming in to mess up things. Before they get here I wish to have matters well cleared up. That is why I am going to put

you through a series of questions right now. I am going to start with you, Mrs. Herson, and I am going to ask you some very pertinent questions. If the others will kindly retire, I am sure we will both be grateful. Wait in the next room, please."

A moment later Doctor Lynx faced the terrified Muriel in the presence of her dead father's body. There was no hint in his voice as he began:

"Mrs. Herson, you are very unhappy with your husband?"

She drew away from him with a frightened gasp.

"What has that got to do with this terrible business?" she demanded.

"This! That any complication in this unhappy household may have a marked bearing on the solution of the crime. Understand me, Mrs. Herson, I know more than you suspect."

"What do you know—or think you know?"

"What were you doing at ten minutes to twelve this forenoon?"

"Playing this piano here."

"Indeed? Were you not in the room immediately beside the front staircase on the second floor?"

"No."

"Did you not have a conversation with your cousin, Billy Gordon, at that time?"

"No."

"Indeed? Isn't it a fact that you are still in love with Gordon?"

"Ah-h!"

The exclamation came from her in a stifled groan. She broke into hysterical sobbing. Doctor Lynx made no move to speak. He regarded her silently.

"What are you trying to do to me?" she asked bitterly between her sobs.

"I am trying to get you to tell the truth," replied Doctor Lynx. "But that will be all for the present. You may go!"

She looked at him wonderingly. What was behind the few crytic questions of this singular man? She got up, still weeping, and he opened the door and let her out. He beckoned to Jeremiah, who was hovering in the doorway.

"Have you received the report?" he asked Jerry in an undertone.

The assistant whispered eagerly into the ear of his chief, produced what appeared to be a small newspaper clipping, and the detective studied it with intent interest. He placed it in his breast pocket and said:

"Did you trace that call?"

Again Jerry whispered, his voice fairly chattering with excitement. The detective nodded approvingly.

"Watch closely now. I think we will be ready shortly. Send in Mr. Ronald Herson. I want to talk with him."

With a dogged, bullying air, as if no detective in the world were going to intimidate him, the lowering Ronald Herson responded to the summons and confronted Doctor Lynx belligerently. He folded his arms, settled himself on his heels and asked what was wanted.

"Haven't you been in financial difficulties recently?" demanded the detective suddenly.

"No. What in thunder do you ask me anything like that for?" growled Herson.

"Haven't you lost rather heavily in San Antonio investments?" persisted Doctor Lynx accusingly.

"Damn it, no!" cried Herson, raising his voice. "I won't——"

"You're a liar!" interrupted Doctor Lynx calmly. "I've got all the facts about you. Financially, you're in deep water. You've been plunging, and you need money badly. Who will get that dead man's money now?"

Sullenly Herson remained silent.

"Your wife, I believe?" prompted the detective.

"Do you mean to insinuate that I killed my father-in-law so that my wife would inherit his money?" blazed Herson.

"I insinuate nothing," returned Doctor Lynx. "But I want to talk to you and find out more about you. I understand that you have beaten your wife on more than one occasion—the servants here have told my man about some of your bestialities and brutalities, and I don't mean to mince words with you. I want the truth."

A sickly white pallor had crept over the swarthy countenance of Herson, and his fingers were working nervously.

"I didn't kill him," he cried, his voice shaking with fear. "I don't know anything more about this than you do. What are you holding me here for?"

A new sound came then on the stillness — the muffled sound of music.

It was a low, jingling melody, like the tam-tamming of tomtoms at a village fair, done on muted strings and drums. It seemed distant and far away.

"What is that?" cried Herson in alarm.

"It's the phonograph!" cried Doctor Lynx in astonishment. "Who would play a phonograph under the roof of a murder?"

He darted across the room, where the instrument stood in a corner. He strove to lift the lid, but it was locked. From within the mahogany box the music came out, unheeding of the efforts of the detective to silence it. For Doctor Lynx knew now what that dread music betokened; he knew that the second prophecy of death would be fulfilled if it were not stopped.

"Watch yourself, Herson!" he called. "Take that rose from your button-hole, man — *quick!*"

The next moment the lights in the music room went out. They stood in absolute darkness, save for a vagabond wisp of moonlight creeping through the window.

Dr. Lynx seized the phonograph and turned it over, hurling it crashing to the floor. There was a scratching confusion of sounds and the music stopped.

But it was too late!

"God! It's got me! *The Crimson Arm!*" shrieked Herson. "Oh-h——"

He pitched forward in the gloom; his body writhed and struck a chair which overturned with a loud thud.

A great groan came from him and he lay still.

The second prophecy was fulfilled—and already, beyond the closed oaken doors of the music room, Doctor Lynx could hear the incessant tingling once more of the diabolical telephone!

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DOCTOR LYNX SETS HIS TRAP

THE electric wiring had been cut.

So much Doctor Lynx quickly established, before responding to the frightened knockings and poundings on the panels of the locked doors and the muffled cries of the others outside to know what had caused the disturbance within. Every effort to restore the lights failed, and the detective stood a moment alone in the darkness, seeking to quiet his mental process before opening the door to admit the others. Here he stood beside the dead bodies of two murdered men—that Herson had been slain he had been able to establish in the very briefest examination. He was stone dead, stricken down in precisely the manner in which his father-in-law had been taken off. By the same mysterious "Crimson Arm" which both had cried out about in their death throes, the deadly fate foretold by the telephone stranger had overtaken them. It presented as baffling a problem as Doctor Lynx had yet encountered in his career of crime hunting.

But a thread of the solution was already in his hands!

"Music," he muttered to himself, grimly enough. "Music and darkness — and the Crimson Arm! Does not that combination work out? There shall not be a third murder in this house—as I expect they are planning. It shall not be!"

But because an inkling, a glimmering, a well-defined suspicion of the truth was in his mind, he realized how quickly, how surely, how dramatically it would be necessary for him to proceed. That moment or two of cogitation in the darkness of the murder-struck apartment decided him. He would wait no more. He cursed himself for not having foreseen what he now apprehended, but he resolved that, now that he was on the right track, there should be no further dallying.

He walked swiftly to the door and shot back the bolt. As the great oaken doors swung back a terrified group stood looking at him—the newly widowed Muriel Herson, the pale and lovely Delyse, the nervous, excitable Billy Gordon, and the drab, sour-faced old family servant, together with others of the menials, holding tight to each other in their terror, the hall lights throwing into wild relief the paleness of their faces.

"What has happened?" cried Muriel Herson, while Delyse took an imperceptible step forward, as if she would whisper some word of warning to the detective.

"Prepare yourselves for a shock," said Doc-

tor Lynx gravely, and he told them what had transpired within the locked room. His eyes were on Muriel Gordon and her cousin whom he knew she loved. He marked the change in the eyes of the woman who had endured the brutalities of the man just slain; he saw the dilated pupils, the swift intake of the breath; he noted the clenched and instantly relaxed fists of Billy Gordon, the sharp click of his jaws as his teeth came together; the instant reaching out of his arm to clasp and support the woman beside him. These and many other trifling details Doctor Lynx noted, for of such little things are woven the tapestry of a completed criminal solution.

"What will we do?" wailed Delyse, wringing her hands, while the servants sobbed and cried hysterically, and Muriel Gordon grew whiter and more staring into empty space.

"I said in the first place that we should have called in the police," said Billy Gordon, with a fierce glance at Doctor Lynx.

"And I told you I represented the police," returned Doctor Lynx evenly. "It is in that capacity that I am still speaking, Mr. Gordon. I am very much afraid that I shall have to continue the line of examination which I began, in spite of the frightful interruption which it has suffered. If you will kindly conduct Mrs. Herson into the library and if you, madame, will accompany us there, together with all the servants, every one in the household, I am hopeful of arriving at a solution within the near future."

"You are optimistic," retorted Billy Gordon with elaborate sarcasm.

This remark Doctor Lynx ignored, merely standing aside to allow them to precede him down the corridor. As he followed, a little apart, Jeremiah stepped from behind a curtain and Doctor Lynx halted.

"What news?" asked the detective in a low voice.

"We've got him," exulted Jerry in a jubilant whisper. "I did just what you said. I couldn't catch the signal——"

"I did," interrupted Doctor Lynx.

"——but anyhow, when the rumpus started in there with the door locked and you and Herson alone in there, I was standing right by the phone. Almost on the instant it began to ring. The blonde—Mrs. Muriel Herson, you know—rushed right up to answer it, but I stood there bold as you please and told her not to touch it. We had a little row of our own, and even your friend Delyse called me down, until I told her I was acting under your orders and then she quit. Meanwhile, following out your idea that the guy on the other end would stay there until the phone was answered, expecting to get off as soon as he had said his piece, I had one of the policemen here on another wire tracing the call. And where do you suppose it came from?"

"From the local railroad station, a quarter of a mile down the road," smiled Doctor Lynx grimly.

"Say! How the divil did you guess that?" ejaculated the mystified Jerry.

"There is a train in ten minutes, and not another for an hour," answered the doctor. "Well?"

"He was still in the booth when we got there," went on Jerry. "And he was one surprised bird. He denied everything, of course, and maybe he's telling the truth. He can hardly speak English."

For all the shadow and gloom in which they moved in those dreadful hours, Doctor Lynx could not repress a broad smile at this confirmation of his deepest suspicions.

"Where is he?" he asked.

"Where you told me to put him," replied Jerry. "In the kitchen."

"Enough. Go back and keep watch on him. I'll whistle when I need you. Oh, but Jerry——"

Doctor Lynx paused, a queer, threatening light flaming in his eyes. A new purpose had been resolved in his mind in that one swift moment.

"Yes, sir?" prompted the dutiful Jerry.

Doctor Lynx stood closer to his tried and faithful assistant, cupping his palms and whispering sharply into his ear. Jerry looked thoroughly mystified. He stared at Doctor Lynx as if he wondered if the famous scientist and detective had suddenly lost his senses. But Doctor Lynx's manner was imperative, and Jerry, with a tug at his forelock, darted down the corridor and went racing up the stairs.

The three remaining members of the Gor-

don household stood in a huddled group near the center library table, waiting for Doctor Lynx with that dull despair which succeeds the first shock of flagrant tragedy. The detective entered upon them quietly, his keen eyes noting their several appearances, even to the minute details of plucking forefingers and quivering lashes. For Doctor Lynx believed implicitly in the value of such observations. He was a psychologist who insisted that the soul betrays itself in little movements of the body—and he was seeking for the evidences of betrayal now.

"Won't you all please sit down?" he asked quietly, and they found chairs—Muriel and Billy Gordon together on a divan; Delyse, regal in her pallor, in an armchair.

"I found this in the hallway," said Doctor Lynx. "Does it belong to any one here?"

For the first time they noticed that he held in his hand a large, yellow rosebud. He held it up and glanced around him at their shocked and startled faces.

What a ghastly thing, they seemed to say in their glances; to rebuke and reprove him for his fatuous asininity in returning roses in a house of sudden death! What a loathesome glance bestowed upon him by the stricken Muriel Herson—who wore a sister rose upon her bosom! What a saddened, uncomprehending glance from Delyse!

"It is mine," she admitted wearily, and Doctor Lynx, with grave punctiliousness, rose and returned it to her. She held it listlessly.

"Now," continued Doctor Lynx, "I think we are ready to proceed. Mr. Gordon, may I ask you a few questions? How long have you been in this country?"

"A little over three weeks," he answered rather sullenly.

"I see. Madame, how long ago was it that you received your first telephone call from a mysterious man with a drawl?"

"About three weeks ago—a little more than three weeks ago, in fact. But, Doctor Lynx, surely——"

She paused, appalled at the suggestion the juxtaposition of the two questions conveyed. Billy Gordon's drawl was one of his most noted characteristics.

"Exactly," continued Doctor Lynx, refusing to allow her to put her protest into words. "Let me continue with you, Mr. Gordon. What caused you to leave this country in the first place?"

"None of your damned business," was Gordon's reply.

"It is quite my business," insisted Doctor Lynx gently. "I think that has a highly important bearing on all this terrible business. Was it not because you had quarreled with the woman who now sits beside you, who you had hoped to make your wife, and who had refused to marry you because you drank?"

His face livid with rage, Billy Gordon sat struggling to master himself. He stubbornly refused to speak, but looked as if at any moment he might hurl himself upon his inquisitor.

"Of course, you need not answer," conceded Doctor Lynx. "You are not legally bound to answer now—but it might be better now than later, and save the lady disagreeable consequences."

He looked keenly at the wrath-filled young man and sat back quietly. Billy Gordon leaned forward and held a low-voiced consultation with Muriel.

"What you have stated is partly true," he admitted at last.

"Is it or is it not true that you urged her to leave her husband this noon, in a room immediately over this on the second floor?" shot back the detective.

"That's a lie!"

Gordon actually sprang to his feet with fists clenched, shoulders hunched forward, ready for fight, and the look in his eyes was not pleasant to see. It was the everlasting battle light in the eyes of man or beast when his natural mate is attacked.

Doctor Lynx remained quietly seated, looking at him keenly. What might have happened in the next few minutes will never be known because of an interruption. Jerry Murphy appeared in the doorway, and in his hands was a long, slender object wrapped in a black cloth.

"Thank you, Jerry," said Doctor Lynx. "Let me have that, please, and then go back and watch what I told you to watch."

Jeremiah, evidently sensing what was hidden from all the others, except the detective, looked appealingly at the doctor, but the lat-

ter was obdurate, and the disappointed assistant went back to his task. Meanwhile Doctor Lynx had unwrapped the black covering of the oddly shaped object and revealed its true nature.

It was a silver flute!

"It may strike you as singular," he began, looking straight into Muriel Herson's eyes, "that I elect to bring such a thing as this into our discussions. Perhaps you will begin to suspect my sanity when I inform you that it will have a most important bearing on the unraveling of this crime. And your suspicions may be perhaps confirmed at what follows; but however that may be, let me warn you that I am responsible here, that I know what I am doing, that however fantastic my actions may appear, they are done for a purpose, and that purpose you know and understand and believe in—the capture of the person or persons who murdered Mr. Eldridge Gordon and his son-in-law, Mr. Ronald Herson."

As Doctor Lynx ceased speaking every light in the library went out!

The curtains were already closed; the door was tightly shut, there was no single ray of light to temper the abyssmal gloom into which they were so suddenly and mysteriously plunged. Jerry had followed his chief's instructions at just the right moment. Gasps and the muttered oaths of Billy Gordon sounded on the stillness, but they were suddenly drowned, and utterly obliterated, in a new and marvelous sound that smote the silence.

Doctor Leonard Lynx, the great scientist, the distinguished psychologist, the astute criminologist, was actually playing the silver flute!

In the gloom and the murky blackness he had placed the mouthpiece to his lips; in the inky darkness his long, slender fingers had found the keys, and into the reeds the doctor blew, and the melody came forth.

A ghastly tune it was, a jiggling tune of the cheap side-show fairs, an Oriental jazz, a weirdly syncopated weave of monotonous tones, repeated over and over again, wild, and sharp and piercingly, cloyingly seductive.

Madness! Intolerable! Had this strange man of science forsaken his wits, that of all the *outre,* bizarre things possible for the human mind to conceive, he should elect to try such harlequinade in the house of murder — to blow such notes from a flute?

And then, two things happened with startling suddenness!

The music ceased, and the lights came up again. And in the silence and the light, in the quiet that came with the ending of the music, and the revelation that was opened to their eyes with the coming of the light, they saw such a scene as madmen see in delirium; as drunkards shudder at on their way down the cliffs that lead to perdition; such a foul and revolting thing as lie in the nethermost reaches of the great darkness.

They saw Delyse Gordon, hands clasped tightly over her breast, sitting bolt upright in her chair. They saw the magnificent sheeny black coils of hair above her broad forehead parted and disturbed, and through the opening thus forced was thrust out the long, coiling red stretch of the dreadful Crimson Arm —a living, poisonous snake, hidden in her hair!

"There is the murderess!" cried Doctor Lynx, his voice shaking with horror and revulsion. "And there is the instrument with which she labored!"

The next moment the horrid thing grew rigid, poised and darted downward, plunging its fangs into her bared breast, just above where lay the yellow rosebud!

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## CHAPTER FIVE

### AND THE WAY OF A WOMAN AS WELL

"BUT how the divil did you find it out?" demanded Jerry.

They were in the big russet limousine which it is Jerry's greatest pride to drive, and having brought Billy and Muriel Gordon into the city and left them with relatives, having turned all the facts over to the coroner, and instructed him what to be let known to newspaper men and what not, they were now on their way back to a restaurant in Old Chelsea, where the two often ate their meals together.

"How the divil did you find it out?" insisted Jerry for the fifteenth time.

"It was neither so simple nor so difficult

as you might fancy, depending on the way you look at it," replied Doctor Lynx. "Several factors entered into the means of solution, not the least of which was my knowledge of Delyse Gordon, God pity her soul, and her peculiar psychologic reactions. You must not forget that I knew her before she came to see us last night. Once I treated her for nervous trouble of a most acute kind that fairly threatened to ruin her operatic career. Again I managed to restore to her some magnificent stolen jewels. So I had associated with her considerably and it was that, more than anything else, that helped me in the solution.

"When she first came to see me last night, I was strongly inclined to believe that she was lying outright. She was, at that; she had never received any of those telephone calls about which she apparently came to tell us. I had treated her so long for nervous trouble that I could tell when she was lying, as she used to lie to me when suffering from delusions. Not until I saw the face of that man at the window did I give any credit to her story whatever. I imagined I had simply another case of hysteria on my hands. But that man's face at the window misled me, or, rather, it made me give more attention to the matter than I should have been inclined to. It was simply a case of a jealous lover spying on a woman.

"At first I admit that I was puzzled at that apparition. But now I know how it was done."

"How?" demanded Jerry, who never had been able to figure it out.

"There never was any face at the window. The face was at the transom of our own door. The man had followed her, and climbed up, with one foot on the knob of the door. He peered through the transom, and the reflection appeared in the window. The arrangement of the lights made that easily possible. While you rushed down the stairs, he probably hid in the darkness of the hallway, and probably escaped later at his leisure.

"But I knew that I had seen that face before. It was the face of a public performer of some kind. And that night, in racking my brains over the thing, I remembered. He was one of the smaller artists at the Metropolitan —Signor Vacheszi. That was why I had you secure for me that newspaper clipping with his picture which confirmed that, and that was why I also made it a point this morning to search and find out all I could about him before ever starting for Exile Bay.

"I found that he had a most remarkable story, and that really gave me the final clue to the mystery. He had spent his earlier life in wandering Italian street fairs; he had been a snake charmer. I also found that Madame Delyse had been carrying on a love affair with him. He was of such an obviously coarse and low a nature that this seemed surprising. You yourself must have noticed that, when they took him to the lock-up, before we left.

"Then, last night, you remember that I had a telephone call, taunting me and telling me I would never be able to solve the mystery. I feel rather ashamed to admit that it took me quite some time to realize that it was Madame Delyse herself who telephoned me — and when, later today, I had another telephone call, and the voice was so manifestly different, I felt sure that it must have been Vacheszi. What interested me most, however, was the fact that when Madame Delyse related those alleged telephone calls she emphasized the drawling voice; when I talked last night over the phone, the drawl in the other voice was emphasized and was, in fact, a perfect imitation of poor innocent Billy Gordon's drawling voice—done inimitably. I went to Exile Bay to-day, convinced that Delyse Gordon was on the way to insanity, if she was not, indeed, already insane; that her old trouble had returned with redoubled vigor, and that she was doing her best to do something to throw suspicion on Billy Gordon.

"Then I overheard a conversation which showed how the land lay between Billy Gordon and his old love Muriel. At first I was puzzled at how they had disappeared from a room in which I had heard them conversing. Later I discovered my mistake. They were not in the room at all. They were in the music room and the sound came up the well of the staircase to my ears and deceived me. So you see, Jerry, I am far from infallible.

"When I got your report I saw something in it that you evidently did not regard as important, but which to me, from my knowledge of Delyse Gordon herself, her fierce psychical

storms and her tempestuous nature, filled me with grave concern and made me realize there was something radically wrong. That was the simple statement that she had once loved Ronald Herson—he was just the big, brutal caveman type that would awe her into adoring him—and that he had married her stepsister. His reason for doing that was plain. He wanted the money that would come to Muriel from her father; Delyse would get nothing except what she earned. It was old man Gordon's wish that Herson marry his daughter, because of an old friendship for his father. And Muriel, smarting under Billy's running away, was ready for the scheme. The unhappy marriage was carried through; it left a track of broken lives, and Delyse Gordon conceived a devil.

"In her mania she must have plotted for years what she would do. She would kill her stepfather for urging that marriage; she would kill Muriel for making it possible; she would kill Herson for consenting. All but one met the fate she planned for them. And with the terrible cunning of the insane she waited until she could accomplish her design in safety, without suspicion.

"I suspected her mental condition when she called last night. She had flirted with Vacheszi, because Vacheszi knew snakes, and he became her tool, her dupe, under her promise to marry him when it was all over. What did he care? He is a natural-born ruffian, and wanted her. He knew the whole plan, and was willing, such was her power over him. With diabolical ingenuity she plotted the whole thing—the telephone calls, the appeal to a reputable detective for protection; his presence in the house when the deeds were done.

"And how damnably perfect were her plans! To put a certain perfume on a rose which would draw the serpent and make it strike; to play a melody on the piano in the darkness and have the snake coiled in her tresses, and in the darkness to lure it with music and let it glide out, strike and return to its amazing hiding place. And, with the consummate generalship, to have the scene different a second time—a victrola, started by an electric connection, the light wires cut, and the snake crawling through a small hole bored in the wall for that purpose. All that I found out, Jerry, afterwards. Some day I will detail all the steps, but not now. How she would have staged the third murder God only knows. She had given each of her victims a prepared rose—her stepfather had one in his button-hole, Muriel had one on her breast, but I snatched it off in the darkness, while playing the flute. I never dreamed Delyse would hold the one I gave to her—the one that caused her death.

"What puzzled me was her signal to the waiting Vacheszi to telephone and thus keep up the elaborately contrived farce, and also the hiding place of the snake. The first I found out quickly—the extinguishing of the lights was enough. But the snake—that was a problem.

"At first I did not know there was a snake. I was powerless because of that. I knew the two men died of poison, but the bite of the serpent was so small I did not at first see it. I fancied the poison had been administered in food. If that were true, I was helpless. The victrola gave me a clue. The music from that locked instrument was plainly design. What would music do but lure and charm a snake? As soon as I realized that, I sent you for that old flute I had noticed in my room, and I myself set out to charm the snake—with what result you know too well."

"And now what?" asked Jerry.

"The papers will say a snake got loose and killed three people. There will be no suggestion of murder. Their names will be clear. After a decent time Muriel will marry Billy. God bless them both—they have forgiven me my necessary harshness in going after the truth. They are fine young people, and will deserve the happiness that will come to them when this horrible nightmare has become a softer memory."

They were caught in the traffic jam at Twenty-third street and Fifth Avenue, waiting for the lights of the tower to change from green to gold.

Doctor Lynx looked whimsically across at Jerry.

"The chess board is safely put aside," he said. "Let's get the car into the garage and go back and finish that game!"

# DEXTEROUS DIGITS

*by Will A. Wilkinson*

BRODIGAN, from police headquarters, broad-shouldered and deep of chest, wearing his habitual frown and chewing unmercifully at the stump of a black cigar, was clicked through one of the several turnstiles admitting to the reserved-seat section of the grandstand. Following close in his wake came "Count" Berford, tall, pompous, portly of build, hair silvered with gray and dressed in perfect good taste; to all outward show a fairly successful man of business, but in reality a character about town known to the police for his adoption of rather shady and unscrupulous methods in the pursuit of a livelihood; at the heels of the two trotted a slim, undersized individual with pinched countenance and black, rat-like eyes that snapped treacherously, the unmistakable chalky pallor of the confirmed drug slave painting his shrunken cheeks.

"That's him ahead there with the sailor straw and the blue serge suit," remarked the officer, pausing and drawing his followers up close before him, cautiously jerking a stumpy thumb in the direction of a slim, well-groomed man farther in the lead. "Don't lose him, now. Remember, if there's any slip-up in this deal this afternoon you two crooks had better catch an armful of passenger coaches outside the city limits. And there's that!" and Brodigan glared threateningly from the plump, pink-massaged face of the "Count" into the shifty, bead-like eyes of "Morphy" Ragan, scowling his most ferocious and terror-breeding scowl.

"Have no fear, my good friend," assured the count easily. "I rest in assurance that it will not be necessary for me to warm the cushions of any out-going rattler so far as *my* part is concerned. I'm letter-perfect, Brodigan!"

"Good 'nough!" rumbled the officer from the depths of his barrel-like chest. "And what's the word from you, Ragan?"

"Aw, I'll be on the job, all right," snarled that worthy from the corner of his mouth. "Don't lose no weight worryin' 'bout me!"

"That's fair. But see that you are—both of you. If there ain't no bungling, and everything goes off as per schedule this afternoon, my cherubic acquaintance, 'Dude' McBride, will more than likely start doing the book for some ten years or so inside of a few days. I've tried at least a hundred times to get somethin' on that crook, and failed. He's beat me every turn in the road up to now; but I've got a little dish cooked up for him today that I think will land him. I can't figger out a chance of its failing—that is, providin' you two guys don't muss things up.

And I'm repeatin' ag'in—better you hadn't!"

"Leave that to us, eh, Morphy?" smiled the count in smooth, confident tones.

"Aw, he's worse than some ol' woman — always worryin'!" growled the surly Ragan.

"All right, all right! On your way, then! He's most out of sight," Brodigan ordered. "Watch your step, that's all I got to say now!"

The count and "Morphy" Ragan moved forward with quick steps, and when the young man in blue serge and jaunty straw lid turned away from the tobacco stall, where he had paused to purchase a package of cigarettes, he never once escaped the sharp eyes of the big crook and his pinched-face companion. Brodigan slouched along behind, mingling with the in-coming crowd.

And as it chanced, not one of the trio, as they paused to converse, had noticed the trim, well-gowned figure of a young woman who lingered just within earshot, and who, so far as outward indications went, at least, had no more trying care in life at that precise moment than the successful application of a coat of powder to her dainty pink nose, which task she accomplished with the aid of a fluffy powder-puff she had fished from some mysterious place of concealment. Her back was turned to the men as they engaged in the final rehearsal of their schemes, and, although she seemed blissfully ignorant of their very existence, one pretty shell-like ear was turned just sufficiently to enable her to catch most of the conversation between the detective and his pair of tools.

Brodigan would more than likely have pricked up his ears and evinced a keen interest in this particular fair patron of the great American pastime had he known her identity, which he did not.

Opal Marr, dainty, chic, was one of the most successful female dips and shoplifters in the United States, although, be it known, she confined herself mostly to Western territory, and seldom had worked in the detective's home city, though she generally managed to pass a month or two out of the year within its municipal boundaries, when she felt entitled to a rest from her "toil."

As Brodigan moved toward her, she gave one finishing dab to a rose-flushed cheek and hurried on, losing herself in the constantly augmented gathering.

Up in the grandstand, "Dude" McBride, dapper, good-looking, a delicate eye-brow mustache adorning his upper lip, and garbed in the latest cut of tailoring, sat watching the work-out of his favorite pitcher. He had more the appearance of some college student blessed with a wealthy dad, or some broker's clerk who had a strangle-hold on a well-paying job than that of one of the craftiest and most elusive of the great army of light-fingered gentry that infested the city. Dude was the Beau Brummel of the dips, fastidious as to personal appearance and with a natural air of gentle breeding and refinement.

The "Dude" had selected a seat in his favorite section of the big amphitheatre directly behind home-plate, where it was possible for him to overlook the offerings of the opposing slab artists with critical eye. He sat erect, hands clasped across the head of his gold-mounted walking-stick, and swept the rapidly filling stand with sharp eyes.

"I'd bet the biggest roll I ever expect to own that I saw that big lummox, Brodigan, somewhere outside in the crowd," he mused, twisting around in his seat in order to view the audience back of him. "I suppose he's figuring some on nabbing your Uncle Dudley in the act of lifting a leather before the afternoon is over. But that bird's in for a good fooling this day, believe me! Pleasure before business is the motto for the present twenty-four hours, and there'll be no nipping a roll from some poor fish on so gladsome a summer afternoon. No; not at all!"

The game was started promptly on scheduled time, and had progressed well along into the contest without having afforded anything of a nature startling enough to bring the fans to their feet howling. In truth, it was proving itself a rather listless affair, and more than once the "Dude" yawned and caught himself wishing he were back uptown rolling a game of billiards with the boys.

The most amusing diversion obtainable proved to be the sketch being put on by a stout, well-dressed man, who, with a companion whose countenance greatly resembled

that of a rodent, occupied seats two or three rows in advance of the Dude.

The big man was clothed in neatly-fitting garments; his slightly wavy hair was grayed at the temples. And, too, it was evident that this individual was no keen respecter of the eighteenth amendment, for his loud voice and general deportment proclaimed indubitably that he had toyed long and unwisely with the cup that cheers, and his outbursts of boisterous, bellowing laughter, coupled with the constant flow of inane remarks and senseless chatter so characteristic of a good-natured souse, brought frequent smiles to the lips of many of the neighboring spectators.

And it was plain, likewise, that the party in question possessed a strain of sporting blood in his make-up, which same was made manifest by his frequent and loudly proclaimed desires to lay wagers with his companion on the ultimate results of the numerous attempts and endeavors on the part of the competing athletes of the ball field. In one big fist he flourished, with drunken abandon, a roll of commanding proportions, which he had abstracted from a large leather wallet he carried in a hip-pocket; and he was exceeding noisy in his demands that his companion cover any and all stakes he saw fit to lay on the hundred-and-one contingencies continually bobbing up on the diamond during the course of the contest.

"Come on!" he bawled; "I'll make it a hundred to fifty ol' Swat Kline don't see second base this time up! What d' y'u shay? Hundred t' fifty — good bet! Come on an' get your feet wet!" as a fence-busting slugger from the visitors strode up to the plate, bat in hand.

He sprang to his feet in his shirt sleeves—the heat of the day called for the removal of his coat earlier in the proceedings — and fanned his partner's nose with a bunch of currency.

His spotless leghorn straw was jammed well back on his head, causing his ears to protrude comically, the unusually well-brushed hair mussed and disordered to a very noticeable degree, while his tasty scarf, graced with a diamond-set pin, was slipping around under one jaw. His fat face had taken on a deeper flush, and his eyes blinked foolishly. The "Count" had assumed a make-up artistic to a degree, and well in keeping with the part he had been cast to play.

Occasionally some outsider, banking on the man's seeming irresponsible condition to lead to the acquisition of some easy money, attempted to horn in by offering to cover some childish wager blatantly offered by the spurious "stew." But that individual seemed chiefly bent upon separating his pinched-faced companion from his bank-roll, and appeared satisfied to lend all his energies toward the accomplishment of that end, seldom condescending to encourage the advances of any stranger, albeit the very scattered few unsolicited wagers he did accept generally resulted favorably to him.

"Dude" McBride sat in amused and silent contemplation of the pair of sportsmen, a smile occasionally breaking about his lips at some particularly clown-like antic of the elderly one; nor can it be said in all truth that his eyes did not take on a covetous glitter as he glimpsed the dilated proportions of the tippler's roll; and with his cane he beat a nervous tattoo on the boards at his feet, fidgeting uneasily in his seat.

"Nix, now, Dudie; nix!" he muttered under his breath. "None of that! You're out for pleasure only to-day. Remember that promise you made yourself bright and early this morning. But really that poor fish does deserve to be separated from that wad he is flashing! It'd serve him just right, carrying a tide and a bank-roll together! Very foolish, very foolish!"

Came the retirement of the last player and the conclusion of the game; and with a final whooping demonstration, the big gambler floundered to his feet, cramming the russet-colored wallet almost to capacity, concluding which he jabbed it with almost criminal carelessness into a hip-pocket of his trousers, donned his coat, and made for the aisle, followed by his snarling-mouthed companion.

The attendance that afternoon had been comparatively large, and the jam toward the exits increased as the seats emptied of their occupants. In the crush, moving with wearisome slowness, Dude McBride wormed his way, and it was not for a moment or two that he discovered that he was directly behind

the loud-voiced possessor of the "tide," who must, in all certainty, have enjoyed a most prosperous afternoon, judging from a monetary point of view.

Impatient, and fretting at the slow progress of the crowd, the "Dude" became aware of an increased pressure being brought to bear on him from behind, followed by the sudden lurching of some one against him, causing him, for the second, to lose his balance and fall against the big fellow ahead.

"Beg pardon, friend," he remarked, politely, as the man screwed his head around and looked back at him. "Awkward of me, I know, but I didn't seem just able to help myself. Shoving behind, you know."

The big chap grunted some response and continued shuffling on his way.

Suddenly he paused in his tracks and mowed a little circle about him with his powerful elbows, pawing excitedly at his person.

"Hey!" he shouted in a heavy voice. "I've been robbed! Some one's got away with my money!"

He glared wildly about him, his gaze finally settling upon our young friend, McBride.

"Who was it that bumped against me just now?" he demanded, glaring accusingly. "That was you, wasn't it, young man?" he roared down upon the astonished "Dude." "Come on across with that jack now, buddy. You ain't going to get away with any of that stuff from me!" He grabbed the "Dude" by the arm and held on with a powerful grip.

"Say, what's eating you, my friend?" demanded the dip, struggling vainly to pull away. "Can this steely-grip stuff and take your paw off me. If you've been touched, you're sure on the wrong track choosing me for it, though I admit I accidentally jostled you just now."

"Yes, and you nipped my leather, kid. Old stuff. Maybe you've lifted my spark, too," pawing at his scarf. "No, I guess you didn't get that, though it's a wonder! Hey! Police! Call an officer, some of you. Can't you understand that this rascal has just robbed me?"

"Hello! What's the rumpus here?" broke in an authoritative voice from the crowd, and a man pushed himself forward. "Who's been touched?"

"I have!" exploded the victim; "and if you're an officer, I demand that you arrest and search this young scalawag instantly! He's the one — I'm satisfied of that. Bumped into me, and all that, you know. Get him before he makes his getaway."

"Oh, he ain't going to make no getaway," declared the newcomer confidently, flipping back his coat and displaying a police badge pinned to his suspender.

"Well, these pickpockets are tricky customers, and they'll stand a great deal of close watching. I can identify my property to a dot: Long pocket-book of russet leather, initials 'J. E. B.' monogrammed on the outside. Contained in the neighborhood of seven hundred dollars in bills and some quite valuable papers."

"And you are certain that this fellow—— Why, hello, there!" broke off the plainclothes man as, apparently, he for the first time obtained a good look at the accused. "'Dude' McBride, eh? Well, well, well! I declare! How are you, 'Dudie,' old boy? Lookin' well, I say. Maybe you're right at that, mister; I know this chap right well. Say, Brodigan"—as that worthy, who had been careful to keep in the background until the proper moment, pushed his huge bulk into the little ring—"our old friend here, 'Dude' McBride, chances to be in the immediate vicinity when this gentleman misses his leather with a good-sized roll in it. Sort of strange, don't you think?"

"Humph!" grunted Brodigan, glaring down at the pale-faced McBride; "I'll say it is! Sort of coincidental, as you might put it," and he winked heavily at his fellow sleuth. "Know anything about this man's property, 'Dude'?"

"Not a thing, Brodigan!" answered the dip.

"No?"

"I said 'no,' didn't I? You'll grow thin trying to fasten this job on me."

"So?"

"Fall off to a shadow."

"Think so, do you, 'Dudie'?"

"I know so! Search me — I'll stand a frisk."

"You just bet you will, my laddie-buck! It might turn out that this is the chance that I have been waiting for so long, and it might possibly—possibly, you understand me—b

that I've caught you with the goods on—that is, if you haven't passed them along to some pal. We'll see."

Came an unexpected interruption, a shrill little exclamation, a half-stifled sob of distress in a feminine voice, from somewhere beyond the edge of the little circle of onlookers: "Oh, dear!" sounded the words in plaintive accents; "my watch — it's gone! Either some one has taken it or I have lost it!"

Brodigan, who was bent in the act of beginning his search of "Dude" McBride's person for the missing leather, straightened up with a grunt and turned to look down upon the prettiest face, the loveliest pair of deep blue eyes he had been fortunate enough to behold for many a long day. The old dick had been years in the harness and his constant contact with the rough side of life had long ago worn away and blunted the edge of a native streak of romance that once may have lurked in his heart. But he was Irish, and the Irish are strong for beauty, and beauty in distress need not call for succor in vain. True, this particular face, delicately chiseled and crowned with a wealth of dark auburn hair, was, at the precise moment, overcast by a cloud of perturbation, while the corners of the rosebud mouth drooped dejectedly, yet it seemed that all the sorrows and trials in the world would prove insufficient to lessen its bewitching charm.

"Eh? What's that, young woman?" demanded Brodigan. "You've been robbed, too?"

"My watch — a gift from my dear, dear father. Maybe, however, I lost it; at least it's gone. And I prized it so highly! It was quite an expensive trinket, too—several small diamonds mounted on the case."

"Humph!"

The old police hound eyed the spot on the filmy georgette waist where, evidently, the timepiece had been suspended, a tiny, golden clasp-pin still dangling from a shred of cloth where it had been torn loose from the ring of the watch.

The girl stepped close up into the little circle, and as he beheld her, "Dude" McBride gave a jump; but the exclamation that almost leaped from his lips was choked back, and died away into a throaty gurgle, for his quick eye and alert brain had caught the meaning of the lightning-like glance darted at him by the girl—a message, he interpreted, forbidding him by word or action to betray his acquaintance with her—*Opal Marr!*

Opal Marr! How the dip's heart pounded at the sight of her!

"What's the trouble, 'Dudie,' my boy?" Brodigan grinned, his trained eye and ear catching the fleeting flash of surprise on the young man's countenance and the half-smothered exclamation. "Maybe as how you recognize another one of your victims in this young lady here, and it sort of flusters you to be brought face to face so unexpected like, eh? I guess mebby we've got the party that lifted your timepiece right here now, miss. Anyway, we ain't a-goin' to be long findin' out. He's a slick one."

"Oh, I do hope so, sir! But he doesn't at all look like a thief. It's possible that you are mistaken." As she spoke she shifted her position slightly without any one paying particular attention to the movement, which brought her to within easy arm-reach of the accused dip.

"There may be a bare possibility that he didn't get your watch, lady, but there is no error about his being one of the smoothest leather and jewel lifters in this part of the country. I know *him!*"

"Can that be possible? Please"—to the bewildered "Dude"—"if you have my property and will return it, I shall be only too glad to drop this whole unfortunate affair at once. My parent presented it to me just a short time before his death, and I treasure it so highly because of his dear memory. Please." There was a touching little tremor in the voice, plaintive and entreating, the depthless blue eyes of matchless beauty threatening to flood with tears; and probably it was because of this, when every eye was bent upon hers in sympathy, that none there was who noted the flash of a white, slim hand toward the person of "Dude" McBride as he cowered before the scowling detective.

"Well, we'll soon have it, miss, if it's in his clothes," was the confident Brodigan's assurance. "Hands up, now, 'Dudie,' and none

of your monkey-business, understand!" With which he began going over the person of the pickpocket with experienced touch.

"Look out! She's fainting!" some one called out from the crowd as the girl was seen to sway uncertainly in her tracks.

"Oh, I'm so nervous and upset; and it's so close and stuffy here," she complained weakly. "I do feel queer. Oh, dear!" She took a step forward, tottering slightly, and the gallant "Count" Berford extended a steadying hand toward her. "Thank you, sir, ever so much!" she murmured, flashing the gray-haired old rascal a smile that set his blood a-tingle.

"That's right," rumbled Brodigan; "get the mob back, Kinney, and let the lady get out where she can get some fresh air." This to his companion officer.

As the veteran from headquarters continued his exploration of the "Dude's" person, meeting with no favorable results, a puzzled look began to stamp itself upon his heavy and impassive countenance. He puffed and grunted, and shot a look in "Morphy" Ragan's direction that caused that worthy to cringe and shuffle uneasily; and at last, after having searched every square inch of the dip's body, and still no evidence of the presence of the missing wallet or the purloined timepiece, the look deepened into a baleful glare.

"There's nothing on him!" he grated savagely, fixing his cold gray eyes upon the pair of discomfited tools. *"He's clean!"*

"He—he must—er—passed it along, don't you think?" mumbled the "Count," a blank look of mystification stealing over his face.

*"Mebby!"* There was a stinging twang of menace in the single uttered word, virulent, malignant, and the whining dope-head cringed and cowered before the blazing eyes of the sleuth, while even the usually calm and self-possessed "Count" became miserably ill at ease, and lost his wonted unruffled equanimity.

"Are you right certain you had a roll?" snarled the raging dick. Somehow, somewhere, there had been a miscarriage of plans, and things had gone amiss; but he was prompt o realize that it was up to himself and his demoralized hirelings to continue their several roles through to the end before the eyes of the assembled spectators.

"Sure I had a roll!" blustered the "Count," recovering his befuddled wits sufficiently to grasp his cue and assume a front of offended dignity. "Most assuredly I am certain! And I am also quite positive that this young man shoved against me in the crowd shortly before I discovered my loss. I had placed the wallet in a hip-pocket—which was the limit of carelessness, I admit—where it is customary for me to carry it. I remember distinctly of placing it there at the end of the game, because—because——" As he was speaking, the crook casually dropped his hand to the side pocket of his tan Palm Beach coat, and his words died out with a jerk, while his jaw sagged in ludicrous fashion as his shaking fingers dragged to light a big russet-colored leather pocket-book which bulged from its contents.

"Why—er—er—how's this?" he gasped in stumbling amazement, perplexity written indelibly upon his face. "Here—here it is, now! Gosh!" A sheaf of green and yellow notes showed when the flabbergasted old scoundrel opened the leather, and eyed them in stupid wonder.

Out in the assemblage some one snickered loudly, which seemed to be the awaited signal for an outburst of raucous guffaws flavored highly with mockery and ridicule.

"Ought to tie it around your neck with a string," some onlooker suggested.

"Rent a safe deposit box!" was added advice from the side lines.

Brodigan's fat face assumed a purple look from the rage that boiled within him, seemingly increasing in depth to the hue of a ripened egg-plant upon glimpsing a sunny grin slyly overspreading the features of the dapper little pickpocket whom he had so nearly corraled.

"Get out of here, you big fish!" he hissed at his discomfited confederate. *"Quick!* I'll get you for this, see if I don't—you and that coke-snuffin' dub with you!"

"But how—how do you suppose he—he slipped the thing back to me?" mumbled the crestfallen "Count."

"Are you right sure he ever had it upon

his person?" The icy words, snapped out shortly and sharply, expressed a world of insinuation that could not well be ignored.

"You think——"

"Beat it, you two *double-crossers!* You've made enough kinds of an ass out of me as it is! But just let me remind you — you're through in this town—both of you. There's that!" The enraged dick strode to the side of "Dude" McBride and muttered hoarsely as he glared with malignant hate: "And as for you, you—*rat!* I'll land you some time! Get me? *Some time!*"

The dip tittered provokingly.

"Ta-ta, Brodie, old dear! Pardon this smile. But just the same, all the luck in the world, old-timer!"

The young man lounged at his ease in the depths of a huge leather armchair, contentedly puffing away at a gold-monogrammed cigarette, exhaling the smoke from his lungs with a gusto that betokened the confirmed smoker.

"Sure it is that you have picked yourself some swell little nest, Opal," he remarked, gazing about the handsomely furnished apartment. "But, come on, tell me how you managed to switch that leather this afternoon. Some neat job, I'll say! And you sure saved your little boy's bacon!"

"Well, you see, 'Dudie,' dear," the girl replied, blowing a ring of pale smoke from her red lips, "the story goes something like this: I blew into your hamlet from out West—K. C. —yesterday, and, if you recollect, when last we parted, it was in a kind of huff. Remember that woman Lill you turned me down for six months ago?"

"Turned you down! Turned you down nothin'!" exploded the "Dude." "You never understood, Opal, and you never would listen to me explain it. Lill happened to be on a lay that called for some assistance, and us being old acquaintances, she took me in under a promise of secrecy and a fifty-fifty split. We put the job across successfully, and cleaned up; and then Lill pulled out for Los Angeles a day or so after, where she's got a man and a kid that she's bugs over. Lot of fun I'd have getting mushy with Lill! Well, in the meantime you had got all sored up and blowed town, and that's the last I heard of you till I spotted your pretty face down at the game this afternoon, where you made a most opportune appearance, I'll say! Well, hon, I'm listening for more."

"Yes? Well, as you probably recall, I'm batty over baseball, and as soon as I learned that the two leading teams of the league were billed to put on a show at the home lot you can bet that it was little Opal for a squat in the shade where I could watch the boys perform. I spotted you as you first entered the grounds, and I was lucky enough to get a seat pretty well back where you wouldn't see me. I was still a bit riled over the thoughts of that dame Lill, and I'd made up my mind that I wasn't going to be the one to make the first crack towards a make-up. On my way into the stand I happened to hear this dick, Brodigan, whom I have known by sight for some time, but who doesn't know me, going over a little mess he had cooked up to job you."

"The big bum!" growled the "Dude."

"Yes, he's all of that and more, I suppose, 'Dudie,' dear. But here's how: I got a big enough earful so's I could guess pretty close what was coming off, and all I had to do after that was to keep my eyes open and watch things. That big stew who was doing all that loud gambling was one of the birds, and the little shriveled-up wart was the other end of the team. But the big fellow wasn't any more liquored-up than you are right now, 'Dudie,' though he sure put it across well, you got to admit. Must be that Brodigan's got something on those guys to get them on his side."

"Bet he feels like sawing them in two with his gat just about now," grinned the "Dude"; "thanks to you, Opal." He reached across the table and patted the slim white hand of the girl.

"Please don't spoil everything with the mush, 'Dudie,' dear. I admit I was wrong about that affair with the woman Lill, and you're higher than a tower with me; but I never was strong for the soft stuff, boy. But, as I was saying, I kept my lamp-lids wide apart and took in every move as it was made. I saw you, all innocent like a baby, fall in behind the big fellow in the crush after the game, but you didn't seem to pay any atten-

tion to the little rat close behind you. He was the bird that slipped the big man's wad into your clothes where it was to be found later by the bulls, according to plans and specifications."

"*He* did?"

"He's the bird, my boy. Then later, when he starts a rush act in the crowd and shoves you up against the fellow ahead, the big one is prompt to let out a squawk about his missing leather. Brodigan and another flatfoot in 'cits' were close at hand, and they're quick to nab you when the holler is made. That's all, 'Dudie'."

"All? All, your grandmother! Tell me how the big fish's wallet gets out of my clothes back into his own pocket again. Come, spill it, Opal. You've got me interested."

"Oh, well, it was easy as pie to nip the leather from your side-pocket where the rat-faced mark had planted it; and when I posed as being about all in from the heat and excitement, and about ready to keel over, I staggered up against the big fish, and—well, there you are."

"And you didn't lose your own town-clock, Opal?"

"Me? Say, it may sound funny, 'Dudie,' but I never owned a watch in my whole life! Never even lifted one; they're dangerous. But I had to have some excuse for butting into the game, and that was the best one I could think up on the spur of the moment. The thing I hate worst of all is that I had to tear a slit in my new blouse—made it more realistic, don't you know."

"I sure wish I'd known that that roll was in my clothes at the time it was," sighed the dip. "I probably would have forgotten all my good intentions for the day and tried to go South with it."

"No regrets, my boy. Forget it. That big lout—or Brodigan, which ever one owned the roll—is out just exactly seven hundred and eighty perfectly good dollars on the afternoon's transaction," laughed the girl merrily, flipping the ash from her cigarette into a dainty silver tray.

"No? But, Opal, I saw the filthy in the leather when the fat guy opened it — nice green boys, and yellow."

"Even so, 'Dudie,' my dear. But as the poet once said, all things are not just as they seem. Out West, I side-stepped my usual line of endeavor for a while and joined forces with a very good friend of mine who turns out some really clever paper, although it is by no means beyond detection at the hands of an expert. I didn't just exactly fancy the game, however, and soon pulled out of it as being too risky and entirely outside my talent; but I managed to hang onto a wad of the 'queer,' and I had it in my possession when I landed in your fair city. It was baby-play to substitute the phonies for the genuine article in the leather. Maybe Brodigan will spot them when he gets a good squint at them, for he's a wise old fox at that, and you've got to give it to him; but the chances are that that other boob won't ever tumble till some bull taps him on the shoulder for trying to unload the junk!"

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## BEES USE THEIR OWN TELEGRAPH SYSTEM

BEES have a language and a system of telegraphy, according to Prof. Francis Jager, chief of the division of bee culture at the University of Minnesota farm. Wonderful progress has been made in bee culture, but their means of communication still remains a mystery, according to Prof. Jager.

Prof. Jager has conducted many experiments in an effort to learn something of the bee's mysterious form of communication. In one of them he took the queen bee out of a hive, which was four to five feet high. As soon as the working bees discovered their leader was missing they began crying.

The crying was audible four or five feet from the hive. Within 36 seconds after the queen been had been replaced at the bottom of the hive the crying subsided at the top of the hive and they showed their joy by standing on their heads, according to Prof. Jager.

# When The Crook Failed

by Gottlieb Jacobs

## CHAPTER ONE

WHEN the police nabbed "Black Bill" Sotten on the charge of having done away with old man Tenuri, they little suspected that Sotten, hardened criminal though he was, was in this instance a victim of circumstances.

The truth was that Sotten had not killed the recluse ex-bartender, circumstantial evidence notwithstanding. The evidence was a "plant." There was no mark of Cain on Sotten's brow. Some one had known that between he and Tenuri there existed strained relations, and had thereupon croaked the former, stashed away with coin there was to be gotten, planted evidence tending to incriminate Sotten, and duly evaporated. Whereupon the officers of the avenging law, blind like so many moles, had laid heavy arms on Sotten and yanked him up stir.

When questioned as to his whereabouts at such and such a time, Sotten folded his arms and maintained an impressive silence. The passage of the horrible third degree still found him mute. Minus half a row of teeth, a good pint of blood, and plus a triumphant leer, he watched the vanquished officers leave him to his own sanctum. And acquainted as he was with the modus operandi of the law, he kept awake through the long hours of the night, by dint of self-applied physical torture.

In the morning "Big Jim" Sotten, obeying the demand of paternal affection, asked leave of headquarters to see the prisoner, with the result that he was admitted to the cell. "Big Jim" Sotten, more frequently called "The Czar," was a power in gangland and elsewhere. He was absolute in his domain. His name was a byword with the gentlemen interested in the moral well being of the tenderloin; a monarch respected because he was feared. If there was a man living besides the governor who could get "Blacky" out of the pen, that man was the elder Sotten himself.

There is a saying that the very walls have ears, which is especially true of the massive, frowning sides of a prison cell. Accordingly, "Black Bill" did not impart in a verbal manner what information he had to disclose to his pater. He had learned, as a full-fledged lamister, crookdom's silent code, and it now stood him in good stead. By dint of sweating blood and racking his mental machinery to the point where further patience was well-nigh impossible, he at length managed to eke out his story to the other. Not a word did he speak as he transferred his thoughts to the groping and capable mind of "The Czar."

The situation was this: On the night that

old man Tenuri had met his death, he, Bill Sotten, had been away plying his trade. With a burglar's kit as sole companion, he had entered a home to demolish a "can" and make himself scarce with its contents. While squatted before the safe, however, he had been surprised by the man who lived in the house. He had managed to make his escape, though not before the house-owner had retained a good view of his phiz.

Still in his mute code, "Blacky" continued:

"I can get out of this Tenuri mix-up easy, dad, but it'll mean I'll have to stay in stir anyway for the burglary. 'Cause I'll have to get the jay I ran afoul of the night I broke into his joint to testify where I was when Tenuri was bumped off, and then I'm in it for fair. See? They ask me what in blazes I was doing at that bird's place, and then of course he'll come out with the truth."

"The Czar" ruminated as he stared into the beseeching eyes of his illiterate offspring.

"What's this guy's name and address?" he inquired at length, without twitching a single facial muscle or making a sound.

"Blacky" tokened the information.

"It's a good thing I kep' my yap shut," he indulged. "Otherwise I'd been cooked. I got a police record, dad, and if just to save my skin for the Tenuri matter I have to tell 'em I been house-breaking, it's a five-year stretch for me."

"Big Jim" buttoned his coat.

"I'll run up and see this guy," he signaled speechlessly, and rapped for the lurking jailer. "Maybe I can do something for you."

"Please, dad!" urged "Blacky." "You can if you want to. You ain't never failed in something you started out to do. You've got influence; promise this guy something to make him swear in court that I was there when Tenuri got bumped off, without mentioning anything about the robbery."

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## CHAPTER TWO

DENAKO'S never closed, in spite of existing stringent police regulations. If a stranger would have asked to be directed to an immaculate café patronized chiefly by renegades and outlanders, Denako's was the sort of place for which he was looking. From dawn to dark it was a sepulchral, deserted mansion, devoid of its nocturnal brilliancy, immune of the incense of soporific hilarity, ostensibly as calm as a church at midnight.. At night-fall, however, it became a blaze of wine and song, a continuous shriek of undue revelry, a bedlam of clinking glassware and corrosive corks. Rumor had it that Denako exerted a pull with the police—it was either because of that, or the preserved staidness of its sanctuary, that it did not attract half the attention its mien invited.

It was here that Harvey Sotten, brother of the thug wrongfully charged with murder, a youth much older in experience than in years, met the Ferret, by pre-arrangement. The Ferret was a "snoop"—that is, a man who sells criminal information to criminals. He was a rat and a snake and a vulture combined. No one knew his real name; it is doubtful whether he knew it himself. A mere whisp of a man, a slinking coward to the core of him, he had incurred the enmity and the loathing of his very associates.

Harvey Sotten had agreed to meet the snoop only because he was convinced the other had something of importance to disclose. It was during the night that the encounter took place—at the time when Denako's reeked with wanton mirth. Harvey uncovered a table in the far corner, bade the Ferret be seated beside him, and gave the waiter an order.

"Down to business!" he notified the Ferret crisply. "What is it you want?"

The Ferret iterated not a word, before his beagle-like eyes had glanced about. Then he regarded Harvey with a bleared and oily expression. His voice was much like a cowardly whine.

"Uh course, uh course, Harvey. 'Down to business'!"

Sotten showed signs of irritability.

"Well?"

"Listen, Harvey." The snoop leaned forward, his voice was a whisper. "How'd you like to look at one thousand berries, and call it your own?"

"Where's the catch?" demanded Sotten aggressively.

The Ferret snickered mirthlessly.

"There ain't no catch to it. Uh course, there's work to be done, and it's gotta be done wit' success. But it ain't more 'n a half-hour's job, and it rakes in a thou."

"Go on," said Harvey thickly.

"Sure! Some guy gimme the lay, Harvey. No diff'rence who he is. He's got a grudge against some bird, and he puts up a thousand cash for him who bumps him off. He knows he kin git some sucker who'll do the job fer two hundred or less, but he wants it done right. No bunglin'. See?"

Sotten jerked his head.

"Where do I come in?"

The proximity of the approaching waiter delayed the Ferret's reply. Through contemplative eyes he watched the white-aproned personage set down two jugs of brew, pocket the currency that Sotten tossed on the table, and clatter away. Then he resumed:

"Don'tcha see, Harvey? I'm saving this thing for you. It's big! A thousand bones—just when you need 'em most. Your brother's in the jug, and he'll need a good defense. Your dad kin git it fer him easy, I know, but why can't you do something fer him without depending on your pop. 'Blacky' needs you—needs your help bad. He's helped you—why not help him now. What yuh say, Harvey?"

Sotten pondered. His fingers toyed with the jug before him. He asked:

"What's this guy's name who you want bumped off?"

"Scarborough," said the Ferret. "He's got a big house, but he ain't rich. He lives down on the Avenue—517 North. You're sure to find him in alone any time you pay him a visit, 'cause he's one of these here old grouchy grandpas that hate contac' wit' the outside world. B'lieve me, Harvey, it's a pipe!"

"What's he look like?"

The snoop described the individual in question fully. At the end of five minutes Sotten's alertly imaginative mind had grasped the mental picture.

"You can't miss him," averred the Ferret, by way of routing the other's indecision. "He's in the house every night. It's a cinch, I tell you! And think of it—one thousand berries! You on, Harvey?"

Sotten fidgeted in his chair. He stared at the Ferret calculatingly. There was no hostility in his gaze. The furtive orbs of the snoop clung to his for just a moment. He started. The palm of his hand came down on the table decisively.

"Yes," he nodded. "I'm in on it. I take you on. My dad won't like it. But I'm going to help 'Blacky'."

He broke off. He leveled a finger. The motion carried a world of significance. His voice bore a deadly calm.

"But if it's a plant to get me like some one got my big brother, look out. Look out for my dad, that's all."

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## CHAPTER THREE

THE Ferret was right, Harvey decided grimly as he pattered swiftly over the walk in the direction of Millionaires' Row. It was up to him to show his worth by helping his brother, now that the latter had been jugged. He must live up to the Sotten name—show them all what Harvey Sotten could do. Of course, the thing wasn't governed by compulsion, all that was necessary, metaphorically, was to lean back in a chair and await the undoubtedly gladsome results, for his dad was powerful enough to see that everything came out all right. But he was tired of lying around and letting some one else do the perspiring. The Ferret had guessed and said as much, at that!

A keen sense of elation tinkled through him. It lent a spring to his step. It started him thinking of his pater, his brother, crookdom in general, the Ferret, and finally, of a thousand dollars. Verily, that amount in currency was money. It would go a long way in getting "Blacky" out of stir. His dad would be angry, he knew, but only at the risk incurred. In "The Czar's" secretive mind he would be lauded.

And gangland would open its eyes. It would see that Harvey Sotten had grown up was following in the steps of his worthy pre-

decessors. Gangland would begin to realize that the virile specimen that was Harvey Sotten was not merely a son of "The Czar."

The squares flew beneath him in swift sombreness. It was as though they realized his precipitance. Nor did the murk of the night thwart his almost mechanical sense of direction. The moon moved as he did, stridently, and the man therein regarded the murderlent Sotten unblinkingly. Presently the tenement houses and the blind alleys and their indelible stench fell behind, and he emerged into a more refined district.

Here it was that the moderately wealthy lived, and Sotten knew that he was not far from his destination; 517 on the Avenue was situated between here and the homes of the exclusive set, he well realized. He continued his swift perambulation until 517 sprang out from the darkness to meet his apt gaze.

The house was gray and forbearing in appearance, and Harvey stalked past it. At the corner he retraced his steps. A speedy and expert glance up and down the street told him that it was deserted. Interference from without was but remotely possible.

He directed his gaze toward a narrow passage that ran parallel with the house at its side. It gave the appearance of a slit in the wall, barely able to admit a human form. It enveloped itself in the impenetrable darkness that was like the recess of a covered grave.

Harvey moved up the alley as though he were a furtive, fitful shadow. In the darkness he waited, prone to see if he had been discovered. His breath came in short, quick respirations, sounding an incoherent rhythm with the anxious beats of his heart.

With cat-like agility he continued his progression. At the end of the alley he stopped, impulsively. Here a sword of light stabbed the darkness. Harvey, looking up, saw that the illumination was diffused by a night-lamp. It shone boldly, like a huge glow-worm in a coal mine.

He looked about for something to suggest a means of procedure. The night-light shone upon the side brick wall of 517. Its incandescence revealed a series of brick crags, located periodically, and projecting from the wall. Moving toward them he started to climb noiselessly.

He became aware that a light shone from the second-story window. It seemed to struggle for existence against the irradiance of the street lamp. Its tones, also, seemed dulled in contrast to the stare of the huge glow-worm of the highway. Step by step he continued his ascent, carefully, and with professional celerity.

His roving eyes probed the interior tableau through the open window, as his grizzled chin came on a line with the sill. A dully bluish light shone upon a staid panorama. The fixtures were those great alabaster bowls, whose ghostly bluish radiance emphasized the strange silence. They sought out for him a scene that sent a thrill of anticipatory success through his veins.

The room was a study, furnished as plain as it was impeccable. A scarlet glow emanated from the fireplace. It sent a warmth through the room that was like a breath of torpid lethargy. In the center there stood a gigantic table, and by its side there sat a man, reading. His iron-gray hair was like a badger's as it seemed to stave off the bluish light of the twin alabaster bowls.

Harvey could not suppress an inward chuckle. Seemingly, luck was with him. This man, whose back was turned sideways from him, was assuredly Scarborough. He tallied in every respect with the description the Ferret had given.

Deliberately, yet with nerves seeped in a spiritual reverie, Harvey drew his pistol. He took a deep, aberrant breath. He looked down at the night light, then back again—surreptitiously. His palm was stiff on the handle.

A moment of tenseness.

He held the weapon ready. His voice, soft yet startling, floated across the room:

"Hi, Scarborough!"

He had been right in his estimation. The man grew rigid. Harvey saw him leap to his feet, horribly scared, like some one who hears his name called from out of all eternity. He was suddenly aware, as he stared before him, that Scarborough's look held in it a glaring reciprocity. From where Sotten stood on the sill, the man offered a perfect target.

The pistol made no sound. It was fitted with a silencer and only a dull click was au-

dible. Yet the bullet bore a path of destruction, as Sotten had intended it.

Scarborough's knees sagged, and he fell to the floor. Not a sound escaped him. Sotten moved silently, swiftly down the periods of brick crags that projected from the wall. On the outside he breathed in deeply, conscious that nothing but success tread at his heels.

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## CHAPTER FOUR

DENAKO'S was at the height of its nocturnal brilliancy when Harvey wended his way through its whited portals. The feeling of elation which he had experienced following his dark work was not yet at its height, though it had greatly increased when Ferret had forthwith handed over to him one thousand dollars of genuine United States notes. Harvey reaped, instead, a greater aftermath—the aftermath of exultation. Hitherto he had merely felt glad; now joy was to ring through him and race in his every fibre.

All sorts of persons crowded the café—thugs, petty politicians and rich men of the Jekyll-Hyde type, who, with their gross-voiced and blithely clad women, shrieked their mirth and spoke in tones loud enough, proverbially, to raise the dead. White-clothed waiters, bleared of eye and silent as death, moved like so many phantoms, catering to those whose wishes were moneyed. Harvey greeted several acquaintances with the flourish of a careless hand, and stalked along the marble-checkered floor swiftly. He was unmindful of stares and whisperings, chancing, he knew, because of his filial relationship with a man who occupied the front pages of the daily papers as the suspected murderer of old man Tenuri. And besides, as the son of "The Czar," he was used to such notoriety.

He turned as a low, familiar voice greeted him. A smile sprang into his face. It lingered pleasantly as he swerved his course and marched over to a table, set aside from the rest, and deserted save for one man. The latter was "The Czar." There was happiness in his great gnarled face—genuine joy in the almost indelible chuckle. His laughing gray eyes watched Harvey seat himself; then he stuck out a hand the size of a ham.

"Mit me, kid," he grinned. "I did a great piece of work to-day—a great piece of work!"

Harvey took the proffered hand. He smiled at his dad.

"So did I. So did I, dad." He grimaced good-humoredly. "A pleasant coincidence—what?"

"Yeah," his pater acknowledged. "'Specially for me. Boy, your great big brother's gonna march out of stir as safely as a lone dime in a vault. And he's goin' out clear. He won't be coming back for no house-breaking, either. He'll be as clear as a bell."

"Good!" Harvey exclaimed. His enthusiasm carried him away for the moment. Harvey had genuine affection for his elder brother, in a rough, tenderloin way. On the instant he had forgotten his own achievement. "Great, dad. How'd you do it?"

"Easy," the "Czar" asserted modestly, albeit with a great deal of aggression. "I know how, boy. You know the story of how 'Blacky' broke in some bird's dive when old man Tenuri was croaked? Well, this guy could identify 'Blacky' because he had caught him bursting his can, but 'Blacky' was afraid if he owned up to get out of the Tenuri run-up, he'd still get a stiff sentence for robbery. The bulls don't know anything about it, and they think the reason 'Blacky' keeps his trap shut is because he's guilty."

Harvey nodded his head stiffly as the "Czar" paused.

"Yes, go on."

"Well, I went up to this guy's house, the one that Blacky broke into night before last, to try and see what I could do about it. I told this man the situation friendly like, and he said yes, he knew, he had read about it in the papers and was undecided what course to take in the matter. I urged him to come out for 'Blacky's' defense — swear that 'Blacky' had been with him the entire night, but to omit the burglary scene. I told him we could fix it up beautifully, what with the best mouth-pieces in the city as our attorneys. I promised him a hull lot—a political job, four thousand iron men, and my favor whenever he needed it. Boy, I made that old bloke see gold!

"He hesitated at first, but at last he promised. It seems his funds were low, his house was mortgaged, and he needed some kale to pay it off. That means we win, Harvey. Of course, without this man's evidence our case isn't worth a red cent. And now it means 'Blacky's' got an almost perfect defense. It means he don't go up stir for house-breaking. It means he gets off scot free. Aren't you glad, boy?"

"You bet I am!" Harvey exclaimed enthusiastically. "I knew 'Blacky' wouldn't get what wasn't coming to him. Now let me tell you what I did to-night, dad. I made a thousand bucks as quick as a shot!" He reached into a pocket and flourished his roll. "Here, take it all, dad. It's for 'Blacky.'"

"The Czar" laughed loudly. He shoved his son's hand aside gently. A light shone in his eyes—a light resembling paternal pride, which is always pleasant to see.

"Keep it, boy. If you made it, it's yours. I don't need it. But how'd it happen along?"

As delicately as possible, for Harvey felt that the situation needed finesse, and with as many petty lies as were needed to make his story a less ticklish one, Harvey told him.

"It was a cinch, dad," he finished. "I wouldn't take such chances at another time, of course, but I wanted to help 'Blacky.' He's gotten me out of dark holes many a time. And I'm not conscious-smitten, either, at that. I know I did wrong, but it was to help some one who is nearer to me than the bird I—er—injured. This guy Scarborough is an old——" He broke off. "Why, what's the matter, dad?"

He stared at his father. On the latter's face there had come a look strange and horrible to behold. It was black and lingering. "The Czar's" nostrils dilated. His eyes held in them a million stabs of appalling illumination. His mouth was wide open. He breathed hard. He started forward as though a bullet had drilled him.

His great hands grasped the almost frightened Harvey by the shoulders. His tone was tense, yet almost a whisper.

"What did you say that man's name was—the man you ki—who is dead?"

"Scarborough," Harvey half-whined. "Why, dad——"

"Quick! Where does he live?"

"517 on the——"

"The Czar" shut him off. He fell back in his chair. He covered his face with his hands. He moaned forth the words slowly:

"Harvey, you've killed our case. 'Blacky' goes to the chair. This man Scarborough is the same man whose house 'Blacky' entered that night—the identical one whom I fixed up to get 'Blacky' out of stir!"

**SPECIAL**

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# The Clue in the Dye

By KATHERINE STAGG

## CHAPTER ONE

GORDON LAKE, the keenest detective in New York City, paced up and down in his big study.

Some of his colleagues rather sneered at him in secret, calling him a kid-glove worker, and dilettante. He cared more for the analytical and unusual in any case than for the mere trapping of the quarry, or the money to be made, as his large private fortune made the latter a matter of indifference. He had long intended to retire, in order to devote himself to the more impersonal study of chemical analysis and microscopic work at which he was a skilled amateur.

But again and again just one more case had come to him with some odd feature that promised so much interest that he had fallen an easy victim to his love of the "great man hunt."

Now he was scrutinizing a letter that he held in his long thin hand, sensitive fingers softly running over it, as if by the mere sense of touch he could read more than was written. It was a short note asking if the writer could call "on very confidential business," and was signed "Margaret Kennedy."

There was no clue in the note to signify the nature of this business, but the moment he had gotten the letter, some inner voice seemed to tell him that this would indeed be a case of interest.

The appointment had been made by telephone, evidently by some secretary, and he had gotten the impression quite distinctly that Miss Kennedy was a business woman; probably from the briefness of her note, and from the fact that it did not give the faintest hint of the nature of the help solicited.

Lun, his Chinese boy, had been instructed to show the visitor in at once. There were to be no interruptions for the space of the interview. He could not help smiling to himself at this precaution, thinking of the inference that many of the boys would give to his action. But he never felt further from a sentimental interest than at this moment. As the bell pealed, again he had that sensation of some great, impalpable cloud advancing, holding a strange and sinister secret back of its dark folds. So strong was this impression that he laughed ruefully and wondered if he was getting notiony and developing "nerves" instead of "nerve." A heap of difference that one little letter—s—makes in the meaning.

"Lady, sir; she come." Lun opened and closed the door in his silent way, and vanished.

"Miss Kennedy?"

The stranger bowed and sank at once into the chair he had signified by a wave of his hand which still held her letter.

A full moment of complete silence followed in which they each studied the other. This little pause was one of his favorite tactics, for most people would plunge into their subject before thirty seconds had gone by. His visitor was not in the least disturbed by his scrutiny, but returned it with a full, measuring regard of large brown eyes that looked as if they had penetrated many secrets, knew the inner and outer guise of people, and were totally unafraid. Yet it was not boldness or hardness that was in them, but deep knowledge.

A woman nearing forty, tall, commanding; graceful in either movement or repose; perfectly gowned, and with a high-class air — yet, with something intangible in her atmosphere that made it difficult for Lake to place her station in life.

"Well, Miss Kennedy, what can I do for you?" He scarcely realized that he had spoken first after his mutual balancing of intent glance.

"Mr. Lake"—the deep, rich contralto voice seemed to fill and penetrate the very corners of the room, yet was keyed low and held its

cadence longer than that of the ordinary speaker, a very rare and fascinating quality—"it is your usual business to find murderers and other criminals, I believe."

"I have accomplished that occasionally." He paused for the follow-up remark, which would be obvious, but he was mistaken.

"I do not strike you as an imaginative person, do I?"

"My dear madam, the highest compliment I could pay any one would be to call him or her imaginative, but if you mean fanciful or too impulsive—shall we say?—then I should answer that I have seldom seen a woman of equal poise."

"I stand corrected. Yes, it is because I have imagination that I am here. In a word, I want to engage your services not to detect or trap a murderer; but to prevent a murder."

"But how do you know a murder is intended? Thousands of people make idle threats when they are angry."

"In this case it is more than threats; the man must be a fiend incarnate."

"Then you don't know this person?"

"Let me explain. I have a private sanitarium not far from here in the eighties. About two weeks ago a patient was sent me by a physician of repute. She is a woman, young, beautiful and refined. She has every symptom of slow poisoning, and is now wasted to a shadow, but our utmost care has not been successful in tracing either the exact nature of her malady or the source from which the poison, if it be that, is now obtained."

"What is her mental condition? Does she wish to die?"

"I am not sure; the poor girl—for she is but a young thing still in her teens—seems to be in a torpor much of the time."

"And the man you call a fiend incarnate is her husband"

"Yes. I am not one to say such things lightly, but he has treated her terribly. He eloped to Europe with another woman two years ago, taking this girl's child with them; it was a plan fixed up between them to obtain money, as the wife is very rich, and he is a man of expensive tastes, and no morals."

"Where is this child now? That would be the keynote to the woman's state of mind."

"She paid a large sum in ransom and they returned the child to the mother, but it died in a short time, and since then the girl has been slowly wasting away. Her heart is really broken. But with the strange supineness of some women, she still loves her husband, and believes him to have been the tool of a designing rival. She is a Catholic, and consequently does not consider divorce for a moment."

"Does this fine specimen of a husband visit her?" demanded the detective.

"Yes; as bitterly as I despise him, I cannot very well forbid his seeing her."

Lake scowled. He saw in the man's visits a chance for the man to take a criminal advantage of his wife.

"Do you allow him to bring her fruits or flowers?" he went on.

"I did at first before I knew her story, but I have forbidden everything of the kind now, and I have myself superintended all food administered. But I am certain that girl is being poisoned. How it is done is what puzzles me!"

"We shall see. Who is this man and what is his business?"

"His name is Roscoe Mann, and he is a manufacturer of dyes. I believe he has rather a good plant now, but did nothing during the war to speak of. It was during that time that he did his traveling with the other woman; of course they went under an assumed name, and pretended to be a married couple. Taking the child made it easy to carry out the deceit."

"Does he appear to be penitent about this escapade?" asked the detective eyeing his caller narrowly.

"Perhaps I am prejudiced, but his apparent devotion seems to me utterly hypocritical. I dislike his type in the first place, and suspecting a sinister plan of ridding himself of his wife to get her fortune, I find it is difficult for me to treat him with the most ordinary courtesy."

Gordon Lake smiled a bit quizzically.

"It is too bad that you cannot influence this Mrs. Mann with some of your own strength of mind," he remarked.

"She is only a girl, but she belongs to the old régime when to be a woman meant submission to any treatment. My luck has been to have had a different bringing up."

"Ordinarily, I might think you were merely carried away by your sympathy, but being the well-balanced woman of experience that I perceive you to be, I feel convinced that there is reason for your alarm. It would be best for me to visit your patient at once, and judge accordingly."

"That is what I would wish. I prepared for the contingency by saying that I was calling in a new specialist to examine her. My car is at the door; if it is convenient, I should like you to go with me at once."

"Very well, I will do that."

Calling Lun, the detective gave a few instructions in a low tone. Lun brought his hat and stick, and he set out with Miss Kennedy in the bright sunshine of an April afternoon.

They drove a short distance through the park, the lovely tender greens of the budding trees making a shimmer of faint light over the bare branches. One could faintly see the auras of the trees by the magic of spring.

Arrived at the house, Miss Kennedy led the way to a large airy room on the second floor.

The furniture was of ivory tint, some of the chairs of wicker, and the walls were done in pastel shades, delicate and restful. There was none of the bareness that one associates with a hospital, and Gordon Lake felt anew the conviction that this Margaret Kennedy was no ordinary woman, the place over which she reigned showing the taste and work of one of superior mentality.

The girl lay huddled in her pillows, so attenuated that she scarcely made a curve under the satin cover.

Her eyes were immense, and the pupils expanded to such a degree that Lake saw at once that some abnormal condition prevailed.

A faint light had crept to her emaciated face when she heard the step of a man following the soft footfall of Miss Kennedy, but a look of hopeless indifference replaced the hope when she saw that the visitor was a stranger.

"This is the specialist I have brought to see you, Pauline. Doctor Lake wants to ask you a few questions. He will not trouble you long if you are tired. We hope he can help you."

The pale girl made a desperate effort to smile, but had to press a dainty bit of dyed cambric to her lips to stifle a sob. Her weakness was such that even seeing a strange face seemed but an added burden to a task almost finished, the effort of living in a world that had brought more than her share of woe and suffering.

The examination was perfunctory, but there was not a thing in the room that escaped the keen eyes of Gordon Lake.

Presently he and Miss Kennedy descended to the reception room, leaving a nurse in charge of the sick girl.

"Well, what do you think?" asked Miss Kennedy.

"I think your conjecture is correct, although I hesitate to make such a statement on such an intangible condition. The girl's eyes are not natural. Even fever does not give that distended pupil, but poison will. Her pallor, too, has a peculiar tone unlike the whiteness of mere weakness. She shows every evidence of being the victim of a slow and insidious poison. But the question is, how is the poisoning being introduced into her system?"

"I am relieved that you do not think me an alarmist," said Miss Kennedy.

Lake shook his head.

"On the contrary, I wish very much that you had called me as soon as your suspicions were aroused. I might then have diagnosed her case better and might have helped her. At present she is so far gone that her recovery is doubtful. Would it matter if I smoked in here? I lay claim to the usual weakness of men of being able to think better when I have a cigar to help my mental processes."

"That is perfectly all right; I understand. Smoke away."

The officer cut and lit a cigar and walked up and down the length of the room a couple of times before he spoke again.

"Miss Kennedy, I am under the conviction that you have watched carefully every detail of Mrs. Mann's treatment," he finally said. "Could you have her changed to another room, at the same time providing her with a complete change of bedding and all requisites of her toilet, even to her nightdress?"

"Surely you don't think that some one here——" Miss Kennedy gasped.

"You and your nurses are above suspicion, but I am convinced that somehow that girl is

being fed a subtle vegetable poison and I want to try the effect of stopping its administration."

"Pardon my quickness. I am sure you are perfectly right. But it comes with a shock to think that there may be a traitor in my own house" — a glimmer of a rueful smile showed her magnetic charm for a moment—"I thought my nurses were hand-picked, as it were, and I just cannot think any one of them could be in this ghastly work of killing that poor girl by inches."

"If my guess is correct," answered Lake, "you need not blame your nurses. If the girl were not so alarmingly weak, I should have her removed to another place altogether, in order to bring the guilt home to the miscreant who is responsible for this ingenious but diabolical performance. But she is too far gone for removal, so another room will have to do. As soon as you have done this, please send me every article she has had occasion to touch for the past week, if possible. Then we will see. When do you expect the next visit of her husband?"

"Not for several days. He was here yesterday, and a nervous wreck he seemed, too. He said he was forced to go out of town on most important business and could not possibly return for a week."

## CHAPTER TWO

"AH-HA! Probably a get-away. Ugly business, Miss Kennedy, and I truly sympathize with you."

"Thank you; I never had such a thing happen in my place in all the years I have owned it. But that poor girl—do you think there is any chance of saving her?"

"I have no doubt your own house doctor is doing all that can be done; but, just the same, call Doctor Simon Rodgers, and we will see what he says. He is at 6— Madison avenue. If it's poison and can learn what kind of poison, he might prescribe an antidote."

"I shall do that, and I'll send you my patient's things in half an hour."

"Very well. We will do all we can. I hope I shall have the pleasure of seeing you under brighter circumstances some time."

"Thank you so much—I hope so."

He took his departure.

At the end of the garden of Gordon Lake's house in East 64th street he had built a stone structure which he used for a laboratory. He had a taste for analytical work and here he conducted many delicate experiments that he preferred not to entrust to a chemist, no matter how confidential their terms might be. He believed in the old saying "a secret shared is no longer a secret."

Here he worked the long night through on the bulky package that had been delivered to him late in the afternoon from Miss Kennedy's sanitarium. The dye in the handkerchief used by Mrs. Mann had attracted his particular attention and he made an analysis of it and found that it contained a metallic poison the mere breathing of which was as fatal as the fumes of prussic acid.

Before setting to work he had done some telephoning and had ascertained that Roscoe Mann had gone to Montreal on a business trip. As Mann had probably given the handkerchief to his wife the detective figured that it would be wise to locate him in case he were wanted for investigation.

Dawn was creeping into the east window when the switch of his house phone rang in the garden laboratory extension.

Leaving his work for the moment he took up the receiver and was not surprised to hear Miss Kennedy's voice come over the wire in an agitated whisper:

"Is that you, Mr. Lake?"

"Yes," answered the detective.

"This is Miss Kennedy. Pauline Mann is dead!"

"I am not surprised—poor girl. Had she lived a little longer we might have saved her as I now know what caused her peculiar condition."

"Just what shall I do?" helplessly asked the sanitarium keeper. "I had your physician here just as the patient passed away."

"I will be up at once. It is as we both thought; enough of a deadly poison to kill a dozen. I will take charge, and arrange it all as quietly as possible so there will be the least publicity for you, although there will, of course, have to be a coroner's inquest. The

evidence of poisoning cannot remain concealed."

He rang off and sighed at the proof of such cruelty in the world that could deliberately sacrifice a young girl to a man's cupidity. Like all good detectives, Lake made a great distinction in his estimate of criminals. He figured that crimes committed in the heat of passion were only what might happen to any one, but deliberate killing is always the work of a mental monster. That Mann, if guilty, belonged to the latter class he had no doubt.

He went up to the sanitarium and had a long talk with Miss Kennedy.

He noticed that the post-mortem condition of the corpse tallied in appearance with that caused by a certain poison. This convinced him that his theory was correct. Then he departed.

The next day he started for Montreal, where he found Roscoe Mann propped up in bed in his hotel suite. He had read the story of his wife's death and telegraphed in return that he had broken down from anxiety and could not make a return trip for the funeral. It was evident that this was his method of laying low, hoping that the death of Pauline would be thought to be only that caused by acute anemia, and that suspicion would not be aroused. But he reckoned without the detective.

Lake had a way of doing things all his own. Pretending to be a doctor he boldly walked into the rooms occupied by Mann without the latter being warned. The suspected man lay in bed reading a newspaper. Unobserved the detective carefully studied him and then felt of his hip-pocket to assure himself that he had his automatic, as Mann might put up a fight.

He took in at a glance the French novels, the cigars and bottles on a tabouret by the bedside, and knew it was only a frame-up to gain time, in order that the heavy-featured man could play safe.

But Lake on the warpath was not a man to be trifled with or hoodwinked.

He strode to the bed, grasped the wrist of Roscoe Mann in his own, held it like a vise, whipped out of his coat pocket a square of white cambric with a tinted mauve border and waved it in the face of the astonished crook.

"Do you recognize this?" he demanded. "It's your wife's handkerchief.

"God!" gasped Mann in startled tones.

"I see you have a slight cut on your chin where your razor slipped," Lake went on. "Put that rag to the cut if you dare!"

Mann shrank back in the ague of fright.

"What do you know?" he burst out unexpectedly.

"Your dye business taught you a fine trick, didn't it?" asked the detective. "And you thought you could go scot free after poisoning your wife by this gift of exquisite, finely dyed handkerchiefs. They were something she treasured as exclusive, no doubt. Use them yourself if you are innocent of preparing the deadly poison I have found in the dye of these innocent looking bits of cambric!"

The onslaught was so sudden and the personality of Lake was so hypnotic that Roscoe Mann broke down with little attempt at bluffing his ignorance of the incriminating things. Lake had counted on stampeding the crook, for he knew it was his best chance on account of the extradition law. Before Mann had gotten his second wind he confessed and signed the confession, and Lake felt that he had brought one more dangerous man to a well-deserved term in prison.

"It's a good thing to be a chemist," he told Miss Kennedy afterward, "for by analysis we have often discovered minute quantities of deadly drugs concealed in such things as dyes —poisons that are thus concealed for various reasons. In this case the object was to bring about the gradual sapping of a human system in such a way that no trace of the drug would be found at the inquest."

"The clue you discovered in the dye led to the downfall of a wicked woman's hopes of enjoying Pauline's fortune," said Miss Kennedy. "Since Mann's capture she has disappeared, so the crime of the precious pair gave them no reward, but has led instead to their ruination."

"Which goes to prove," said the detective, "that the path of the transgressor is hard."

And with a hearty handshake he left her to resume his habit of trying in vain to give up criminal detection.

# The STRANGE CASE of HENSHAW

by

*Orrin W. Simons*

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Fanciful and grotesque stories of purely the imaginative kind are sometimes intensely interesting. "The Strange Case of Henshaw" makes no pretension of a scientific basis; it was merely a peculiar idea, developed into story form to amuse its author, but possesses sufficient fiction merit to warrant its publication. —*The Editor.*

"I'M sorry, Dave, but the loss is practically complete. As I said before, the fault is entirely mine."

"When father made you sole trustee it was done with the stipulation you were not to reinvest the funds."

"I know, I know. But, my dear nephew, things look so differently beforehand. I was positive——"

"Why didn't you consult me? The estate was so soon to pass into my hands. There's absolutely no excuse for you."

"None whatever. My only idea was to take advantage of what seemed to me a sure thing. I expected to have the proud satisfaction of turning over to you on your birthday double the amount your dear father left you." Andrew Henshaw rose nervously from the comfortable chair before the fire and paced about the large, well-furnished room, occasionally giving his head an impatient shake. Presently he stopped by his nephew's chair. "David, I'll make this up to you before I die. I have no one depending on me. It shall be the one object of my life."

"That's all very well, Uncle Andrew; the thought does you credit, but how are Rose and I to exist in the meantime? You know the state of my health. It's hard to have to give up everything. Father built this house—how his heart would ache if he knew!"

"What can I say? I am consumed with regret. Actually you could have put me in jail."

"The loss will be a terrible shock to Rose. I dread telling her." David half rose from his chair, then sank back again. She might as well be spared this bad news till the last moment. What a comfortable, happy life they had lived in this beautiful home with its spacious, well-kept grounds; no reasonable wish ungratified. Visions of joyous days flashed through his mind. Dances, lawn parties, and, most precious of all, the companionship of his father; the place was filled with cherished memories. And now all was to be swept away. He looked up suddenly. His uncle stood hat in hand.

"I'll be away for a few days," he was saying. "Don't be down-hearted. I'll find a way to straighten matters up so there will be

come income remaining." The door closed quietly and he was gone.

But he stayed on in David's thoughts. Uncle Andrew had been so much at their home that he really seemed part of it. A genial, well-bred man, not only generally liked but admired for his good looks, his gray hair and smartly trimmed mustache in pleasing contrast to a rather highly colored complexion. A well-knit figure though not over five feet and a half in height. Always carefully groomed, perfect in deportment, he was usually a leader in social events. In his early days he had wandered about the world. Years had been spent in this way until one day he walked into his brother's home, well dressed, prosperous looking, though actually in much need of financial help. He was cordially welcomed and through the influence of David's father a lucrative position was secured for him.

During the ensuing twelve years he had been ever welcome at the home. It was shortly after his return that his brother's wife had died. The grief of that loss had hung over the home for years. She had been a devoted, loving wife and mother; indeed Howard Henshaw had never been quite the same afterwards. David's reminiscences were interrupted by the entrance of his pretty sister, a lovely vision of youth, her cheeks rosy with the cold November day. She crossed over to David's chair, bending to kiss him.

"My, it's nice and warm in here. Kenneth walked over with me from the Averills, but it was so late he wouldn't come in. Had a dinner engagement with the Hoyts. He wished to be remembered." The something in her brother's expression, a tired, worried look about the eyes, caught her attention. She had often charmed away these fits of depression. "Dave, dear, you must brace up." She had seated herself on the arm of his chair and was stroking his hair. "We must try to be cheerful for each other's sakes. Father would feel badly if he knew you were taking it this way."

"It's brighter since you have come in. Uncle Andrew has just left."

"And so near dinner time. He isn't generally in such a hurry."

"He will be away for a few days. He only stopped in on business. I intended calling you not knowing you were out."

"Davie, dear, something has happened. Look at me." She held his face between her hands. "Tell me; what did Uncle Andrew say?"

"It was business, business. You know how it always bores me."

"Now, see here, young man, I'm not to be put off in that way. He told you something that was unpleasant for you to hear." She rose, drew up a low stool and seated herself at his feet, resting her arm on his knee. "Now, I'm ready. Please tell me everything he said."

"Oh, Rose, don't be silly. Here, read me another chapter of the novel; there'll just be time before dinner." David picked up a book from the table which she accepted and laid in her lap.

"Do you realize I'm twenty years old? It probably seems to you a very sudden sort of thing for me to do, but I have ceased to be a child. And you and I were never more in need of each other than now. I'm not weak-minded nor am I a coward. I'm sure something has happened and if you continue to refuse to tell me I shall be far more miserable. You know I have a vivid imagination and I shall think things far worse than what has really occurred."

Realizing the uselessness of further secrecy, David told her of the loss of their entire fortune through the unlawful act of their uncle. She reached up and took his hand while he was speaking. The touch of comradeship and sympathy helped to restore his spirits.

"That was an awful thing for him to do. Think how much he owed to father. But we'll manage somehow. My piano playing may be a way. Professor Coville has always wanted you to help him in his laboratory and you like that sort of thing. If we can save the house it will be easy to rent. We'll manage; you see if we don't." She was busily planning, discounting the misfortune by meeting the new conditions unfalteringly. No wonder David was proud of her.

"You're the right sort, Rose! I'm ashamed of my weakness. If I was like I used to be; but many a fellow fared far worse—think of those who never came back, think of the cripples and the insane. I'll be well in a year or

two. Dr. Shiras was quite encouraging. It was the loss of father——" He put his hand over his eyes.

"There, Davie! I hear Thomas coming to announce dinner and your hair is all mussed up. Here, don't go up to your room. When he has gone I will straighten it with my comb. You don't have to fuss over yourself to look nice."

"You're the best, dearest, sweetest sister in the world!" David was saying as the butler appeared to announce the evening meal. No one would have guessed who had seen these two seated in the spacious oak-paneled and beamed dining-room that anything was amiss.

Later, when they had returned to the living-room and she had arranged her chair by the lamp, she opened the novel they had been reading and her sweet, young voice drove every spark of gloom from the naturally cheerful apartment.

She had scarcely begun when the phone rang. When David answered he found Professor Coville at the other end of the wire. After the preliminaries the conversation ran about like this:

The professor said: "I want to see you to-night."

"Wouldn't to-morrow do? Rose and I are here all by ourselves. I shouldn't care to leave her alone."

"I must see you to-night. Suppose I run over for a while?"

"I should be delighted if you won't mind coming out on such a dark night."

"Within a half-hour I shall be with you."

David repeated the short dialogue to his sister. "This seems to be a day of adventures. Now, what do you suppose would bring him out at such an hour?"

"You should have gone over when he invited you. I had some letters to write, so it really wasn't necessary for you to stay at home on my account; and besides, he seems so frail. Perhaps if you started at once you might meet him near his home and so save him the greater part of the journey."

"No, Rose. Though you may think me inconsiderate, I feel strongly opposed to leaving you. After the way you stood by me and fortified me when my courage broke down—well, I couldn't!"

"Your courage didn't break down. I just said natural things. What do you suppose is so important that it will not keep till to-morrow?"

"I cannot imagine."

For a while they sat silent puzzling over the strange visit to be. Presently the bell rang and Professor Coville was announced.

He came quickly into the room, greeting the brother and sister perfunctorily. He was evidently greatly excited, his thin, sensitive face paler than usual. Though past fifty, he looked too old for his age, perhaps because of his stooping shoulders and the fine wrinkles that were spread all over his face. When he was seated he began at once:

"Your Uncle Andrew was here to-night."

"He certainly was; but how did you know?" David asked.

"Never mind about that. I'll explain some other time, though what I have to say concerns him. Perhaps I had better see you alone if Miss Rose wouldn't mind."

"I'd like to have her stay if what you have to say isn't too shocking."

"Why—er—you perhaps both know he isn't all he appears to be. Perhaps Miss Rose is fond of him. I can leave out some part of the story—or——"

"David didn't want to tell me about our loss this afternoon," Rose broke in. "Don't you think that way of treating women has had its day? You must think of me as a silly, frivolous sort of creature who is only to be amused and entertained; but if——" She rose with just a sign of moisture in her eyes.

Professor Coville was quickly on his feet.

"Why, I was plainly in the wrong! Let me apologize and pray be seated. What I have to say is so away from the beaten track that I—well, in fact, there is nothing you might not hear, and after all it is to ask David to be at my workshop to-morrow night that I am here. Yes, and there is something for you to do, too, Miss Rose."

When they were seated he continued:

"Andrew Henshaw planned to leave this place to-night and never to return. I have arranged it so that he will be here to-morrow evening at nine and it will be your part, Rose,

to hold him till we return. I cannot say how long it will be and therefore you may find your ingenuity somewhat taxed as his suspicions are aroused. Yes, he has been guilty of a number of indiscretions, to put it mildly, but this is really—well, he is your father's brother and I will say no more on that point. Your property is all in his hands, intact. Your home is mortgaged to the limit. Every available security has been turned into cash!"

"Then, why not have him arrested at once? For my part I would have no compunction about putting him in jail." Rose turned to look at her brother for his approval.

The professor resumed:

"Very good indeed. I felt sure you would decide that way and I have taken the liberty of making arrangements in case my experiment fails."

"May I ask what the nature of the experiment is?" David inquired.

"To raise your hopes and then fail—it may fail, is more than likely to—you would wish I had held my peace. In fact, you will do me a favor if you will allow me to leave your question unanswered."

"By all means, but there is another point that greatly puzzles me. If you knew Andrew to be an untrustworthy person why didn't you acquaint my father with the facts? This trouble might then have been avoided."

"Your question is a perfectly natural one. My reasons were these: Since his return Andrew has led an exemplary life. For the first few years I kept constantly in touch with his movements. My knowledge of his actions was minute. Secondly, I was not aware your father had made him sole trustee of the estate. It seems it was because of David's ill health. His tenure of office was only to last a little over a year, this arrangement probably having been made because of the diagnosis of your case by Dr. Shiras. He assured your father you would be a sound man by that time. My own opinion is that you are much nearer complete recovery than you realize. The weakness from which you suffer will soon pass. In the third place Andrew is a very likable fellow. As time went by I forgot the past and came to trust him, too. Knowing I was acquainted with his indiscretions he probably made an especial effort to gain my good will. When Howard died the balancing influence for good was removed. His inherent weakness, without support, could not stand against temptation. There are many characters like that in the world—poor creatures who are carried this way and that by the currents of life—more to be pitied than condemned; yet we must protect ourselves against them. Some day in the future a clever chemist will concoct a pill that will be a character strengthener and then we'll be freed of all but the consummate villain."

"You two men may think me harsh when I say that I never quite trusted him," said Rose. "The suspicion was a latent feeling and I only at times was aware of it. My friends all liked him and he was often invited to join parties of the younger set."

"It seems a pity nature should have combined such agreeable manners with so undependable a degree of moral strength, but I believe, if we are honest with ourselves when we look into our hearts or consciences, we are sure to find certain qualities of which we are not proud. None of us are perfect. My sympathy and pity for Andrew has been the inspiring motive of this attempt. The shock may add something to the better side that will last him through the rest of his life. There, I'm delivering a lecture—that's the worst of teaching."

Shortly afterward Professor Coville took his departure, declining David's offer of his company, but reminding him to be on hand sharply at nine.

The two young people sat up till after twelve discussing the professor's revelations and the prospects for their future, and it is doubtful if either had much sleep that night.

The next day passed without adventure and promptly at a quarter to nine David set out for the Coville home. The night was much like the preceding one except for a stiff breeze that banged shutters, tossed the nearly bare branches of trees about and sent riotous hordes of dried leaves scampering along accompanied by blinding clouds of dust. David was glad of his overcoat, thanks to Rose, who insisted he wear it.

The professor's home was beyond the confines of the town and well back from the public road. It was at the foot of a thickly wood-

ed hill and at night seemed gloomy and lonesome enough, though a light at the front door and another on the third floor where the laboratory was gave a small degree of cheer. As David opened the gate the wind nearly carried his hat away. It kept up a steady roar in the forest beyond and sang a siren song in the telegraph wires on the other side of the road. The night was so black the form of the landscape could only be guessed at, the road, now the town lights were left behind, had been hard to follow.

His summons at the door was quickly answered by the nimble little chemist. The house was an immense affair, far too large for the household—Professor Coville and two middle-aged maiden cousins — whose lives were given to work among the poor and needy with little time to spare for social life.

David followed his host up the three flights of stairs, the final one entirely dark, for which the professor apologized. David was familiar with the laboratory, though it seemed on this occasion more gaunt and dreary than usual. It may have been the effect of the chill blast without, which kept the windows rattling and banging and occasionally swayed the draperies in the room. These consisted in the main of two heavy, dark curtains of some thick material that could be drawn across so as to shut off the farther part of the laboratory. Why they were here the professor only knew, but they were serving their purpose upon this occasion.

"I'm sorry it is such a wild night," the old man said. "Does it feel too chilly in here?"

"Why, it might be much worse," David diplomatically replied.

He was led to an upholstered settee against the wall on the opposite side of the room. Professor Coville, though the possessor of so frail a body, did not seem concerned by the low temperature as he wore no coat, though a heavy, dark woolen shirt may have protected him as well. His trousers were shabby and stained by chemicals; a pair of down-at-the-heel slippers protected his feet.

Bottles, retorts, distilling devices and various other paraphernalia were everywhere in seeming disorder, though they may have been in the most perfect arrangement according to the professor's views. At all events the law was strictly laid down that the meticulous neatness below stairs was not to enter here. An old-fashioned arc light was sputtering behind the curtain casting dancing shadows on the ceiling.

"Now, David," said the old man, "if my experiment is successful you may be greatly upset by the result."

"Has it anything to do with my uncle?" he asked.

"Indirectly, yes. It will be best that I prepare your mind for what may follow. It has worked successfully in three of the dozen times I have tried it. No human being shall ever know the formula I use. Would it be a great shock to you if you were to see your father again?"

The very thought set David's heart to pounding. He glanced quickly at his companion to note any traces of insanity or a distorted idea of humor, but could find no evidence of either. The kindly old face bore an expression that indicated the strain of long hours of work; the eyes appeared sunken, the lids heavy as though from lack of sleep.

David's voice, between strained nerves and the chill air, was so unsteady that he found difficulty in answering. His whole body was shaken by constant tremors. In a broken sentence he expressed the great joy he would experience if such a result should be obtained.

"He will go home with you to meet and deplore his brother's faithlessness. Andrew has a weak conscience, but I believe the actual presence of the kind brother he has so wronged, especially in the presence of his children, will move him to make restitution. This seems better than the disgrace of a prison sentence."

"God grant that your experiment is successful. I would gladly give up my fortune and I know Rose would, too, to meet again the dear companion and guide of our childhood days." David's nervousness had so increased that the professor insisted he imbibe a small cupful of liquid he poured from a bottle bearing a label in Latin.

"If I am successful your father will be with you but only for a short time. Actually it will only appear to be he but to all intents and purposes the effect will be the same. I shall not see you again to-night in any event.

If I fail I will call out from behind the curtains, the light will go out and you must leave the laboratory as soon as possible as a deadly gas is formed when the experiment fails. Use this flashlight under those conditions so you will not miss your way."

"In any event let me thank you for your great kindness. I shall never forget your effort to aid me." David seized Professor Covill's hand in a firm grip, a spontaneous action to express his deep feeling.

The old chemist rose.

"You will probably not have long to wait. If your father appears he will come to you and you are to leave at once. Don't pay any attention to the sounds you hear. Good-by." He turned away at once and disappeared between the curtains.

The settee had been placed so that David had an unobstructed view. At once the light brightened and a curl of white steam or smoke rose toward the ceiling. The curtains, that had appeared to be of a dark drab tone, turned gradually a vivid red, then by degrees to green and finally a delicate violet tint. Under this latter the texture assumed an apparent transparency though nothing could be seen through. Meanwhile a hissing sound that gradually increased in intensity accompanied the display of colors. Other sounds were now heard as though heavy weights were being thrown on the floor, jarring the whole building, and then the professor's voice, high and choking, suggesting a tightening rope about his neck while he was trying to call for help. For the moment David feared assistance might be needed, but he had been warned not to be disturbed by any sounds he should hear and so remained in his place. Other noises were added to the pandemonium till the effect was most disconcerting.

Finally the boom of a great gong sounded above all else and the other noises seemed to gradually recede, giving an effect of space and immense distance before they finally died away. He was conscious of several distorted faces near him which dissolved as soon as he fastened his attention upon them. Then all became quiet. Even the clatter of the storm temporarily ceased. The light behind the curtains grew steady and then these same curtains parted of their own accord and after a short pause a figure appeared in the opening.

"Father!" David cried.

"My dear son," came the reply, and the next moment Howard Henshaw clasped his son to him.

What unspeakable bliss—the return of a loved one from the portals of death! The professor's directions were followed precisely and they were presently on the road. David became aware that the gale had no effect on his father's garments and also that his feet made no sound as they came in contact with the road. His voice was clear enough but appeared to come from all about them rather than direct from his father.

"Have you been happy since you left us? Have you seen mother?" David asked.

"I hear your voice," the wraith replied, "but can converse on only one subject except to greet Rose and you."

"Can you say how long you will be able to stay with us?"

The reply was merely a repetition.

"I assume then that Uncle Andrew——"

"We are limited to that one subject I am sorry to say."

David naturally longed to hear of his mother. The appearance of his father seemed so real it was hard to believe death had ever actually taken him away. Happy as he was to have his parent with him he found himself resenting the restrictions. How he longed to hear about the dear mother whose taking away had left such a gap in his youth.

These unhappy meditations were interrupted by the voice of his companion: "Andrew is to be pitied. I made a mistake in putting the temptation in his way. He had no premeditated scheme. It was just an inability to control a weakness in his character. It is unfortunate I am to see him to-night, but it cannot be altered now."

"I wouldn't want anything to happen to him. Couldn't we just step into the hall and take Rose out with us? Your words fill me with dread."

"It cannot be altered, but you need not feel any responsibility. You are in no way to blame."

"Is Professor Coville the dictator of your actions and of mine?" David asked. For the

third time the restrictions were recited, but this time an addition was made to the effect that a fourth indiscretion might have unfortunate results.

They were now at the door of the home.

"Rose must be prepared," David said. "She has not the vaguest notion of Professor Coville's plans."

"I was about to caution you," the wraith replied.

David opened the door with his latch-key.

Meanwhile, what of Rose?

She had seen her brother on his way and with much concern as to whether she should have allowed him to venture forth in such chilly, disagreeable weather. In her favorite chair by the light in the living-room she tried to read, but so many thoughts crowded in upon her that the printed words failed to have any meaning so that eventually she laid the book aside. It was hard to sit still and wait. She finally went to her room for a bit of embroidery on which she had spent odd moments during the past two or three years, and which she hoped eventually to finish. Fortified with this form of nervous relief, she returned to the lower floor and stitched diligently till her uncle was announced. He entered with an assumed air of joviality, but his restless eyes betrayed him to the keen observation of Rose.

When he asked for David, she said:

"He will be out for a little while, but wishes you to wait. There are some points on which you can be of help. He will be back presently."

Henshaw pulled out his watch, looked at it without reading the time and returned it to his pocket, hardly aware of the action. He too was so engrossed with his personal affairs that he found it difficult to control his thoughts.

"I have an appointment at ten," he said. He roamed around the room like an animal in a cage, stopping occasionally to gaze at some object with vacant intensity.

"Tell me, Uncle Andrew," Rose began, "now there is no longer any estate for you to look after, shall you still be administrator?"

"Why, technically, yes, unless I am removed by process of law," he answered.

"Then, wouldn't it be a good idea for you to prepare a statement showing just how the estate is lost? You say every penny is gone and mentioned what you at one time considered a good investment as the main cause. Was it all sunk in one enterprise?"

Henshaw fumbled in his pocket. His shaking hand did not escape the watchful eyes of his observant niece. "That is the main reason of my call to-night—that, and to say good-by. I shall be away for about a week. Ah, here we are." He advanced to the table and, having adjusted his glasses, spread out a typewritten sheet. "The Birne Iron Corporation," he read, and then commented: "The prospects were immense. Nearly five hundred to one. I went into the holding company. It was to be enlarged and a new allotment of stock was to be made greatly to the benefit of the original investors. Several of the big trusts were organized this way."

"Do you know any one connected with it?" Rose asked.

"Why, yes. A most remarkable coincidence. A chap I knew in South Africa—Col. Harry Jones. He hadn't much to invest, but knew a manufacturer who uses quantities of Swedish iron and who was most enthusiastic about this new process. He held a large block of the stock."

Rose's one object was to keep her uncle talking. So far it seemed an easy task, but when the imaginary details of several deals were exhausted he grew restless and finally, after having glanced at his watch again, said he must be going.

"Oh, just a minute!" she cried. "There's a book I want you to take along with you to read on the train or boat, whichever way you travel. Dear me, where have I put it?" She searched through the bookshelves, keeping up a constant fire of small talk meanwhile, till at last Henshaw interrupted her:

"Never mind, Rose. You can send it to me if you will be so kind. I really can't wait any longer. This friend of mine is so quick to take offense. Well——"

"Ah, here it is," Rose broke in. "David and I enjoyed it so much. The author is only

twenty-five. We think he has a great future. Here, let me wrap it up for you."

"No, really; don't bother. I'll take it just as it is. Say good-by to David for me. Tell him I'll write."

But Rose insisted on wrapping it and took her time about it, refusing his offer to do it himself. She was growing nervous too. Would they never come? But just as she had finished she heard footsteps on the gravel path.

"There's David now," she cried. "He will have something to say to you, too."

They could hear the hall door open and presently David entered the room. "Good-evening, Uncle Andrew," he said.

Henshaw returned the greeting and then began to explain that he would have to be going at once.

"I won't detain you long," David responded. "Will you pardon me just a moment? I have something to say to my sister."

Drawing her toward the door he gently explained the situation. It was almost too much for the girl after the strain and excitement she had been under, but the miracle of her father's return brought with it a flood of joy that quickly revived her, and the next moment she was out in the hall, her arms about his neck, weeping and laughing all in one.

Meanwhile Henshaw stood by the table, a strange expression on his face. Perhaps he overheard some slight portion of the greeting in the hall. His hands were clasped tightly together indicating the effort he was making to hold himself under control. He must have realized some scheme was afoot for his undoing.

In spite of his uncle's rascality a wave of pity went through David, his father's words ringing in his ears.

"It's too bad to have kept you so," he remarked, crossing over to Andrew's side. "You say you are only to be gone a few days. There is some one here to see you—some one whom you should be glad to see, if your conscience is clear."

"What's this about my conscience? Have you anything of which you wish to accuse me?" His chin was held high, the expression of his face bearing none of its usual genial suavity. The contrast was so startling David thought of Jekyll and Hyde. He had never seen his uncle like this before.

Looking Henshaw squarely in the eyes he said: "Until yesterday I would have defended your honor against the world. If you are sure you have done nothing but what is right you will meet without fear my father—your brother, who trusted you." As he said this he threw open the hall door admitting Howard Henshaw and his daughter, who was clinging to his arm.

As they entered Andrew seemed to shrink into himself. His usually florid face turned purple, the eyes rolling up into his head; the mouth, half open and drawn so as to show both sets of teeth, his fingers stretched out stiffly, all indicating an apoplectic stroke or kindred disorder.

"God have mercy on me!" he gasped, hoarsely. "Am I mad?"

As Howard Henshaw slowly advanced Andrew sank forward to his knees, mumbling incoherently. He was probably past comprehending his brother's words when the latter asked what he, Andrew, had done with the estate of his two children.

The writhing body of their uncle was such a ghastly sight that David led his half fainting sister from the room. When he returned a moment or two later, alone, Andrew was shrunken to a miserable heap and was slowly rocking from side to side on the rug.

Turning to where his father had stood near the door, only a dim shadow remained, the face clearest, but the whole impression growing steadily fainter.

"Don't leave us—don't leave us now, father. We need you so!" he implored, but within the space of a few minutes nothing remained. This time Howard Henshaw had gone forever.

# The POISON PEN

by

*Edward Sparks Brown*

THE visitor, ushered in by a bowing secretary, advanced briskly to the motor magnate's desk, setting the black bag he carried upon its thick glass top.

"Mr. Webb, I believe," he nodded to the executive head of the second largest motor company in America.

"Quite so, Mr.——"—the motor magnate glanced at the card he held bearing the visitor's name—"Williams. What can I do for you?"

"Considerable, I hope," Williams replied, the fingers of one hand pulling lightly at his freshly trimmed Vandyke, those of the other thrust with seeming carelessness under his coat. "First, though," he continued in his easy way of speaking, "I would like to show you something. I am sure you will find it interesting, as it has a direct bearing on my business with you."

With a quick movement he withdrew the hand under his coat, bringing to view a fountain pen of ordinary appearance.

"This pen is an invention of which I am justly proud," he went on, unscrewing the cap and disclosing a fine steel needle perhaps an inch in length.

He shook the fountain until a drop of jet black fluid fell from the needle point to the glass desk top.

"Now watch closely," he said suddenly, "and I will show you how neatly and effectively it works."

Opening the black bag, he reached within and lifted out a pup of mongrel lineage, holding the animal firmly by the skin of its throat.

"Watch closely," he commanded sharply.

With a quick movement he jabbed the needle into the pup's neck at the base of its brain, then withdrew the needle and set the animal upon the desk.

The motor magnate, staring fixedly, saw the pup struggle desperately to keep its feet, only to fall suddenly on its side; saw the animal's eyes bulge and its legs stiffen as froth came from its mouth, and, still watching, saw it give a last convulsive shudder and lay still.

"One of the swiftest poisons known to medical science," Webb heard his visitor say as through a dense fog. "Death invariably follows its injection within sixty seconds. And there is enough left in this pen to kill ten men."

"Good God, man, are you crazy?" Webb burst out, the fingers of one hand picking at his lips, a habit he had when deeply disturbed.

"Not so loud, Fletcher Thompson," said Williams, stepping around the desk and standing close to the motor magnate. "One jab of this needle and you follow the pup. Your very life depends on your silence and the strict obedience of my orders. Understand?"

Webb, little clusters of sweat gathering suddenly on his forehead, nodded numbly. He was feeling fear as he had never felt it before.

"It's a mighty good thing for you that you do," said Williams meaningly, rolling the poison pen between his fingers. "Now listen. Telephone your secretary and tell him that under no circumstances are you to be disturbed until further notice. And if you make any attempt to let him know that your life is in danger, you are as good as dead. Understand?"

Again Webb nodded numbly, fingers picking at his lips.

"Well, see that you do as I say," said the other grimly.

Picking up the pup's body, he dropped it into the bag, drawing and snapping the sides together.

"Come! Come!" he said as Webb sat staring at the bag as though hypnotized. "Use that telephone and be quick about it."

Webb, his face ashen, moistened his dry lips as he reached for the instrument Williams shoved toward him.

"Fisher," said Webb to his secretary a moment later, his voice thick and faltering, "see that I am not disturbed until you hear from me again."

"Now then, Fletcher Thompson, let's get down to business," Williams snapped out as the motor magnate set the telephone instrument on his desk.

"Why do you call me Fletcher Thompson?" Webb asked, brushing a hand across his forehead.

"Because that is your true name," the other replied, leaning near. "No use to attempt to deny it, you—murderer. I am Henry Atwater."

"Henry Atwater!" Webb half sprang from his chair. "Impossible!" he cried. "Atwater is in prison for life."

"If you doubt that I am Henry Atwater—look!" said Williams.

Baring his shoulder, he disclosed a pale, froth-like scar, almost a perfect circle and about the diameter of a fifty-cent piece.

"Atwater," breathed the motor magnate, staring hard at the scar. "Atwater," he repeated as though dazed.

"Yes, Atwater," said the other bitterly as he buttoned his clothes. "Atwater, your former partner, on whom you cleverly shifted the murder of John Storm, that you might gain possession of your mine and the money that has since enabled you to realize the wealth and position you now enjoy. It was you who shot Storm with my rifle, and then cunningly hid it under my mattress, later to be found by the sheriff, a friend of yours, who aided you in the dirty plot you hatched up against me."

"Don't deny it, you cur," Williams snarled as Webb half raised his hands as though to protest. "Oh, but I've waited for this hour, this hour that is to make up for the twenty hell-filled years I spent in prison because of you. By good behavior my sentence was reduced to twenty years, and I became a free man six weeks ago."

"And now, Fletcher Thompson," he snarled savagely. "I demand my vengeance. And, by heavens, I'm going to have it."

"Yes, yes, Henry," said Webb hastily, twitching fingers at his bluish lips. "Anything you say. I—it was all a mistake, and——"

"Enough of that, you lying dog!" Williams harshly interrupted. "Listen to me. I have found out that you have on deposit in the Merchants National the sum of fifty thousand dollars. I want that money. It will just about even things between us and enable me to get a start somewhere under another name. And unless I get it——" He paused, fingering the poison pen suggestively. "Well, unless I get it this needle goes into your miserable neck and you will go the way the pup went."

"But I—it would be impossible for me to draw fifty thousand dollars at a moment's notice," Webb protested. "I——"

"It will not only be possible for you to get it, but you will get it," Williams cut in, his voice savage and threatening. "You will go with me to this bank and withdraw the fifty thousand, explaining that a sudden deal makes it necessary for you to have the money. This

is done every day, and you know it. I will be at your side and the flicker of an eyelash on your part to call assistance will result in this needle being jabbed into your neck. You owe me this money, and as sure as God made little apples I'm going to have it. There's a taxi waiting below. Are you ready?"

"And after you get this money, what then?" asked Webb, raising apprehensive eyes to the man standing over him.

"Time enough to answer that question after I get the money," Williams answered, taking up the black bag. Come. We will leave by your private entrance."

Rising slowly as with an effort, Webb got his hat, then unlocked and opened a door giving upon a short corridor.

"Go ahead; I'll shut the door," Williams directed. "As a matter of precaution we'll take the stairs down."

Gaining the street, Williams directed their steps to a yellow taxicab standing at the curb, opened the door and motioned for Webb to enter. Williams, after a few words to the driver, followed.

"We're going to the Merchants National," he said as the taxi started off. "You will draw out the fifty thousand in five hundred and thousand-dollar bills. And just keep in mind all the time that if you try to give me away you're a dead man. I'd as soon kill you as I would a snake."

Webb, gray-faced and trembling, sat huddled in a corner, restless fingers at his lips, eyes darting every few seconds to the poison pen held firmly in Williams' nearest hand.

"Here we are," Williams suddenly announced as the taxi swung in by the curb and stopped. "Well, are you ready to go through with it?" he snapped.

"Yes, yes," was the quick answer. "I'll do anything you say if you'll keep that damn needle away."

"Now, remember," Williams again warned as they entered the bank, "any attempt to escape or give me away and you're a dead man."

Webb made no reply. Going directly to a counter he seized a check pad and rapidly wrote a check for fifty thousand dollars, payable to himself. Tearing it from the pad, he strode to the cashier's window, Williams at his side.

"Split this into five hundred and thousand-dollar bills, Jim," said Webb, nodding to the cashier. "Got a deal on and need some cash to swing it."

"Don't think I can split it that way, Mr. Webb," said the cashier, glancing at Williams as he pulled out his currency drawer. "No, I can't," he added. "But wait a moment," as Webb started to speak. "I'll see what's in the vault."

He stepped from his cage, returning within three minutes, a packet of currency in his hand.

"You're in luck," he smiled as he slipped the paper band from the bills. "I can make it with these, I think."

Working with nimble fingers, he quickly counted out the desired denominations, made a neat pile of them on the counter, then caught them together with a heavy rubber band.

"There you are," he said, handing the packet to Webb.

"Thanks, Jim," nodded the motor magnate. "See you later."

Slipping the bills into a side-pocket of his coat, he turned and followed Williams from the bank and into the waiting taxicab.

"Just drop it in here," said Williams, opening the black bag. "It will keep the pup company," he added, a grim smile crossing his lips.

Webb, shuddering visibly at sight of the dead animal, took the packet of bills from his pocket and dropped it into the bag.

"Well, is that all?" he asked, breathing deeply.

"Not quite," Williams replied as the taxi got under way. "Before we part company I want you to see the stateroom I've engaged on the *Empress*."

"Stateroom on the *Empress?*" Webb, fresh fear seizing him, faced his captor, who sat calmly, the black bag across his knees, the poison pen held firmly in the fingers of the hand resting lightly on the seat between them. "What devilish thing are you going to do now?"

"No matter what I do, it won't be enough," was the savage retort. "Think of the twenty years. I sweat blood because of your dirty work, and then ask me what I'm going to do!

I ought to jab this needle into you, that's what I ought to do."

A silence followed that lasted until the speeding taxi drew up before the pier shed where the big liner lay docked.

"Out with you," Williams ordered. "And don't try to make a getaway, either."

Williams, carrying the black bag, kept close to Webb's side as they entered the long shed and made their way toward the gangplank running from the pier floor to the liner's deck.

Once on board, Williams, without a moment's hesitation, conducted Webb to a stateroom on the second deck, unlocked the door and stood aside, his eyes commanding the motor magnate to enter.

Webb, after an apprehensive glance into the room, entered, closely followed by his captor, the latter closing and locking the door.

"Now then, you big stiff, lay down on that bed and be quick about it," said Williams roughly, setting the black bag on the floor and taking a small bottle and a package of cotton from his pocket. "This boat is due to leave in an hour, but I'm not going with it. You are. Quick, I say. On that bed with you."

"What—what are you going to do?" Webb blurted out a little wildly as Williams tore the wrapping from the cotton and made a pad of it.

"I'll tell you what I'm going to do, you big stiff," said Williams suddenly. "I'm going to give you ether and put you to sleep for a while."

"Don't — don't kill me," pleaded Webb wretchedly, suddenly caught in the grip of a terror spasm. "Don't kill me. I'll—— Oh, God, don't kill me!"

"Then flop on the bed and take the ether, you — baby," said Williams, uncorking the bottle.

Webb, trembling violently, sweat dripping from his forehead, fell rather than placed himself on the bed, and as Williams poured some of the ether on the cotton and leaned over him the motor magnate fainted from sheer fright, his last impression being that some one was pounding loudly upon the stateroom door.

"Here is the fellow's record in a nutshell, Mr. Webb."

Detective Colburn of the Merchants National, slid a yellow slip of paper across Webb's desk in his office next day.

"And he's a slick bird, too, if you'll listen to me," the detective continued. "Plays a neat hand at the stock swindle game and flings a nifty pen as a forger. Name is George Elm, but is known from coast to coast as "Slippery" Elm. He took advantage of a little yard freedom out in San Quentin and escaped in a creamery wagon six weeks ago. He'll get a stiff sentence this time, or I miss my guess."

"Gad, I hope so!" said Webb. "He took at least ten years out of my life. What did you find out about Atwater?"

"Atwater died two months ago," Colburn answered. He and 'Slippery' used to be cellmates. Atwater was sent up for shooting a man named Storm. He claimed that a man named Thompson shot Storm and switched it on him."

Webb leaned suddenly forward.

"Listen, Colburn, and I will tell you something," he said. "Thompson was my brother-in-law. As to his killing Storm I can't say. Of Thompson's life in California, as well as his association there with Atwater, I have no direct knowledge. All I know is that years ago Thompson came East and started the motor company of which I am now president. When he died, two years ago, I succeeded him as president. Atwater evidently didn't know this. At least Elm didn't, and believing what Atwater had told him about Thompson, he thought he could hold me up for fifty thousand."

"Oh, he's a slick bird, take it from me," grinned the detective. "Lucky thing Jim thought something was wrong here in the bank and put me wise when he went after that currency so I could shadow you and find out. Guess I got into that stateroom just in time to save your fifty thousand, and maybe your life."

"You certainly came in the nick of time, Colburn," said Webb feelingly. "And while money is poor payment for such a service, I took the liberty of mailing you and Jim a check. You will probably find yours at the bank when you return."

# Red Mercy

By LEWIS H. MOULTON

TO the casual observer Chester Harcourt was the most ordinary of young men. He was, it is true, handsome, slender, bound to look well in evening clothes; but in our fortunate land, this constitutes no particular distinction. You would not suspect him of being an operative in one of the city's chief detective agencies. Nor was he the kind to suggest an adventure so startling as that which befell him on that memorable July night.

The address that he had given the taxi-driver was in a lonely and deserted section of the city. At this hour the whole of the street on which he lived was plunged in darkness. His flat building, in especial, conveyed this impression of utter desertion. His apartment was on the second floor where he dwelt alone. The landlord, who occupied the rooms below him, had gone out of town for two weeks, taking his family with him.

After paying, and generously tipping his chauffeur, he hurried to the vestibule, where, for a moment he fumbled with his key. Once within he made his way up the dark stairway. As he mounted it, he heard his departing taxi chugging in the distance.

He entered his apartment: a single large room around which were grouped an alcove, a small bedroom with closet, a hallway leading to the kitchenette, and a tiny den in which were a bookcase, a writing desk, and a telephone stand. The past week the detective had been at work on a particularly strenuous job, and he welcomed the opportunity to relax. After he had washed and shaved he put on some comfortable slippers and dropped happily into his morris-chair. The clock upon the mantel had run down; but from a distant church there chimed the hour of eleven.

The nearest neighbor a block away, he felt no compunction in playing his victrola. He put on the "Miserere" from "Il Trovatore." It was in the midst of this selection that the phone rang.

Leaving his record to the care of the automatic stop he went into his little den in which he had had the telephone put.

It was Val Ryder, a fellow detective, calling from the North Side Branch Office.

Their talk was brief. Ryder had merely wished to assure himself that Harcourt had come in on the night train, and to request him to report at the Branch instead of the Main office at eight o'clock in the morning. They exchanged a few pleasantries, after which Harcourt said "Good-night" and rose from the stand.

The record on the phonograph had begun to grate noisily, the automatic brake having failed to work. He hurried toward the machine to stop it.

As he stretched out his hand to push the lever, he heard a footfall within the alcove. He wheeled. The portieres parted; framed in their vivid tapestry was a woman's face.

"You, Valeria, at this hour of the night! How came you here? What does this mean?"

Suddenly Harcourt felt himself gripped by both wrists—felt them drawn relentlessly behind him.

"I am not alone, you see," replied the woman, upon her hard, cold lips a mocking smile.

"Come, Valeria, slip on these handcuffs, and help me bind him," The voice was deep—guttural.

His wrists were clamped in the merciless steel. He cried out. Instantly, the man clapped a rough and hairy hand over his mouth. "None o' that!" he rasped. "It might interfere with our plans. Gag him, Valeria."

Though he spluttered and choked, they forced into his mouth a great wedge of cloth,

jamming it so tightly as almost to strangle him.

Deftly the woman roped his ankles. The man lifted him as though he were a sack and threw him roughly upon the morris-chair. The irony of thus disposing of him was not lost on Harcourt, and his lips twitched feebly.

For the first time he was free to look at his assailant closely. He was short, thick-set, with a curly, black beard. Gabriel Lodge! With the recognition—the full realization of the identity of his opponent—his blood froze.

The woman, Valeria West, went to the windows, pulled down all the curtains. Lodge stood before his victim, folded his arms, looked down upon him scornfully, his bearded lips curled in studied insolence.

Harcourt mutely questioned these cruel masks. "What do you want with me?" he seemed to ask. "What is your purpose?"

Lodge rolled his eyes; ran his thick, heavy hands through his matted hair. They interchanged a look.

Then Chester Harcourt grew stiff and tense. In that swift glance he read too well the object of their visit.

At his sudden pallor, Gabriel Lodge laughed brutally, and the woman echoed him with silvery laughter.

But suddenly her thin lips tightened. She no longer mocked, but stabbed with spiteful sincerity:

"You detectives hound us at every turn. None have hounded us more than you, Chester Harcourt. And we hate you. It was you, Chester Harcourt, who put a rope around my brother's neck. I suppose you think you'll get *me* yet. You or some other of your accursed agency."

Harcourt set his teeth, tried to think. There must be some way out.

"I see from the expression on your face that you begin to understand," twitted Lodge. "You did for two of my gang, the time I led them in the raid on the Federal Bank. You dirty cur. But now, why should I awaken these unpleasant memories, since we are meeting *for the last time?*"

In the reddened eyes was bitter hatred. In that countenance was no mercy, no promise of yielding to any of the common emotions of humankind. Bound and fettered as he was, the words, "the last time," sent a thrill to the heart of the young man.

His eyes roved despairingly toward the doors and windows. Lodge gave a fiendish chuckle.

"And now, Harcourt, we have you where we want you. We can do with you as we will."

Straining every muscle, their unhappy victim strove to free his limbs.

"Pull away, my boy, much good it will do you."

The clock upon the mantel stared upon the scene blankly.

In tones sweet as honey the woman began to speak:

"But. Gabriel, we did not come to-night for talk. We are to entertain our friend in another manner. One more — stimulating. We must not disappoint him."

It was clear, all too clear to the helpless man why these two had come to him in the dead of night. It was murder—gray, pitiless murder. In what hideous form would it come to him?

Their voices began to seem far away. Was this he, Chester Harcourt, who heard Valeria ask:

"And when we have buried him?"

And the man saying:

"We are ready, Valeria."

With slinky, feline grace Valeria went to the sideboard and took from it a fluted goblet. The wide bulk of the man loomed between the prisoner and Valeria. When he stepped aside, she had disappeared. Then Harcourt heard the sound of water running from the faucet in the kitchenette.

When she re-entered there was upon the face of that she-devil such an expression as he had never seen before; one in which were blended devilish triumph and devilish anticipation.

And now the unfortunate man was brought to comprehend the nature of what was in store for him.

He drew a deep, sobbing breath.

Gabriel Lodge took from his pocket a vial containing a red fluid.

He poured a few drops of this into the fluted goblet. He thrust it toward Harcourt.

"Drink!" he commanded fiercely.

"Yes, it is poison," he hissed. "You are to die slowly that we may feast our souls upon your agony. You, Harcourt, are to drain this goblet—drain it to the dregs."

Valeria delicately withdrew the gag. Then she held the goblet to his lips. He drew back.

"No use. No use," taunted Lodge.

Chester Harcourt gazed about him wildly. What use to struggle? He was in their power. Why not swallow the poison? The sooner would his sufferings be over.

The fluted goblet was at his lips; he parted them, sucked in the fluid.

And then!

From somewhere came the sound of smashing glass. Voices, hurrying feet. They were bounding up the stairway. He spat the poison from his mouth.

"The pistol, Valeria, the pistol!" cried Lodge in sudden frenzy, realizing they were trapped.

They burst in, half a dozen of them—Val Ryder in the lead. The couple, in their turn, were seized and manacled.

It was now Harcourt's turn to smile, though his stiffened cheeks did not respond easily to the effort.

Nonchalantly he turned to Valeria and said:

"Next time you jimmy into my apartment intending to murder me you'd better look the ground over more carefully. While you were in the alcove I was phoning Ryder. At his end of the wire he could hear plainly that record I was playing. Just before I said 'Good-night,' he asked me to play it through once more for him. So I left the receiver off the hook. He must have listened in to your ranting about what you were going to do to me, and suspected something wrong. Am I right, Ryder?"

Ryder nodded.

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## MACHINES WITH SOULS

IS it an impossible or absurb suggestion that in the construction of a complicated piece of machinery there should be built into it some part of the designer's or worker's personality; in other words, that the finished machine should be possessed of some form of intelligence, or soul?

The suggestion comes up in connection with the extraordinary chain of fatalities in the matter of the "car of death," the big Benz which originally belonged to Prince Henry of Prussia.

When the Prince owned the car it knocked down and killed a pedestrian, and was sold in consequence. Since then the car has passed through the hands of three owners, and in each case has killed a man. The fourth fatality occurred on the Cologne Suspension Bridge.

The case is paralleled by the shunting engine known as "The Assassin," which became notorious some years ago as a murderer. This engine belonged to the Pennsylvania Railway and worked in the Jersey City freight yard.

"The Assassin" had an uncanny turn for evil, and in the first year of her life killed three men, while a dozen others had the narrowest of escapes from her wicked wheels.

Her driver vowed that she would of her own accord quicken pace when she saw a chance of catching a man crossing the track in front of her.

Eventually "The Assassin" got so bad a name that no one would drive her and she had to be scrapped. The old driver who told me the story added that if any part of such a machine were built into another engine, that one too would share the same unpleasant characteristics.

Not all machines, happily, are malicious. Here is a much more pleasant story. The wife of a well-known peer possesses an ancient musical box which once belonged to her husband's grandmother. This box had long ago struck work and for 20 years had refused to play a single note.

When the peeress' eldest son was born, suddenly and quite of its own accord, the old box played a tiny tune. Not another note did it utter until the second son was born, when again it behaved in the same strange and rather uncanny fashion.

# The Unknown Cracksman

By RUFUS BRADY

BILLY HAVEN was no ordinary burglar. His theory was that if a man wished to make a success and a safe getaway he needed to use his brain rather than his muscles. It was all right enough, when starting out to commit a burglary, to take a knife with you, or a loaded club, or a pistol, but Billy claimed that doing this showed a lack of mental ingenuity. Any muscular fool can bludgeon the senses out of a half-awakened householder aroused from his first deep sleep by the noisy entrance of a thief through the kitchen window, but bludgeoning Billy looked upon as clumsy and unnecessary. The consequence was that Billy soon began to build up an enviable reputation among the police. They never caught sight of Billy or his pals, but they always recognized his handiwork by the neatness and dexterity of it. They did not even know his name, but they called him among themselves Billy Haven, out of respect for the memory of a detective of that name, who was especially good at tracking crimes of a kind whose origin was obscure and the clue to which was not visible.

They said among themselves, when their attention was first directed to the kind of work the new burglar was doing, that this was a job Billy Haven would like the unraveling of if he were alive. So they drifted on, never getting a sight of the burglar, until the crimes were called Billy Haven jobs, and finally the unknown cracksman came to be called Billy Haven.

As a general thing, where Billy Haven was at work, the inmates of the house never knew a robbery had been committed until the next morning. Billy and his gang left almost no trace of their visit except the disappearance of the most valuable things in the residence.

At last these neat burglaries ceased, and there were no traces of Billy for years. It is probable that the authorities would never have known any particulars about Billy's career, if it had not been that a convict dying in one of the prisons told about Billy's last and successful coup, which enabled Haven and his gang to retire into respectable but monotonous private life.

Billy, it seems, had long looked with hungering eyes on a large mansion that stood in a lonely part of a lonely suburb. It was entirely surrounded by a high brick wall, and Billy felt that if he and his pals ever got inside that mansion they could work in uninterrupted security.

Inquiry showed Billy that it was the residence of Mr. Slider, the well-known banker, a man intimately connected with numerous Wall Street companies, and a person of reputed wealth. The name Slider was a power in the city. Billy's investigations led him to the knowledge that Mr. Slider was a most careful man, who had arranged every electrical appliance known for the discovery of a thief. He appeared to realize that if once a burglar got entrance into the big house, the family would be, comparatively speaking, at his mercy, and so it was that every window was protected by half a dozen different devices. The door-mats and windows were so arranged that after everybody went to bed the lightest footfall on any of them would light all the electric lamps in the house; would ring a large bell in the hall; would telegraph a warning to the nearest police station, and would set more gongs ringing all over the place than a burglar who was at all nervous cared to hear.

Billy realized then, that the ordinary methods would have a tendency to fail if applied to the big house standing in its own exclusive grounds, and so he resolved that when he and his pals entered the house it would be by the door, and not by one of the windows, and it would be at a time when the family had not

retired to rest. Billy's plans, when matured, were very simple. He obtained the costume of a police official for himself and the clothes of an ordinary policeman for each of his four pals. He got a fake warrant of arrest, which he made out in the name of Mr. Slider. Billy was the man of brains in the gang, and the other four, realizing this, did exactly as he told them. They were in a perfect state of discipline, and had the utmost confidence in Billy's ingenuity. The plan was this: They were to obtain entrance into the house at about nine o'clock in the evening, in legal form; the fake official was to arrest Mr. Slider, who might, of course, be indignant, but the conspirators expected that the respect a banker has for the forms of law at least insured submission, under protest. Then while the inspector stood guard over the arrested man, two of the alleged policemen were to be posted so that no one could leave the house, even if Mr. Slider wanted to send a messenger away, which was not likely, because of his certainty that this was a mistake which could easily be cleared up. The phone wire was to be cut.

The other two alleged policemen could then search the house under the protection of a bogus search warrant, and quietly secrete all the valuables and money that they could lay hands on. The fake inspector then intended to tell Mr. Slider that, because of his protests, he would not take him to jail, but that he must understand that he was under arrest, and that he might have to report at headquarters when called upon to do so. Billy imagined that the time which must intervene before the news of the unwarranted arrest reached the real police would give him all the opportunity he wanted to cover his tracks and secrete his spoils.

This plan worked admirably up to a certain point, when Billy and his pals were treated to a stupefying surprise. The man at the porter's lodge tremblingly admitted the officers of the law into the grounds. He was then ordered to lock the gates, which he did, and one of the policemen took the key and remained in the porter's lodge with the man and his wife, who were certainly very much frightened. Another policeman was left to guard the entrance of the house, while the bogus inspector and the remaining policemen rang at the front door. The person who admitted them was also terrified at the sight of their uniforms.

Billy asked if Mr. Slider was at home, and was informed that he was in the drawing-room. He then asked that he and the officers might be shown there without being announced.

Mr. Slider was sitting in an easy-chair surrounded by his family. He turned his head round, and when the door opened without the customary knock, and when he saw the uniform of the inspector a ghastly pallor came over his face. Before the inspector could speak, he held out his hand, and said:

"One moment, please." Then turning to his wife, he remarked in a low voice: "Take the children to your own room, and stay there till I come. I have some business with this gentleman. Don't be alarmed. Everything is all right. I had an appointment with him, but forgot to mention it to you."

The woman and her frightened children withdrew, and Slider stood alone confronting Billy and his two pals.

"I am sorry to say," began Billy, "that I have a warrant for your arrest. All the entrances are guarded, and, of course, you understand the futility of making any resistance."

"Quite so; quite so," said Slider, huskily. "I appreciate all that."

"I have also a search-warrant here; and, while I stay with you, my men must have a look over the premises. Do you wish me to read the warrants to you?"

"It is not at all necessary," said Slider in an agitated voice. "I have no doubt they are quite correct. As for searching, I have no power to prevent that; but, before you begin, I would like to make a proposal to you, inspector. You look like a shrewd man. How many policemen have you with you?"

"I have four," answered Billy.

"There are five of you altogether, then?"

"Exactly."

"Now, inspector, I am a man of business, and, as you know, a man of great wealth. I would like to have a few words with you in private. Would you kindly ask these officers to step out of the room for a moment?"

"That is hardly regular," objected the fake inspector.

"I know, I know," answered the banker hurriedly, "but I think I can make it worth your while to do what I ask."

"Rogers," said the crook to the fake policeman beside him, "you and Benham just step out for a moment into the hall and come at once if you hear me call."

Rogers and Benham saluted and withdrew without a word. When the door was closed, Billy stood with his back against it and Slider remained standing near the fire.

"If I had happened," said Slider, "not to have been at home when you came, what would you have done?"

"I presume," answered the supposed inspector, "I would have tried to find out where you were without arousing suspicion, and if that could not be done, I would have had to come some other time."

"Precisely. Now, what will you take in gold to go back to the station and report that you have not been able to find me?"

"That would be a dangerous business," said Billy, quite honestly.

"I can make it worth your while to run the risk," said Slider. "Give me a start of twenty-four hours and that is all I ask. Now, how much?"

Billy hesitated and pondered for a moment.

"What do you say?" he said at last, "to five thousand for me, and three thousand apiece for each of the men?"

"That would be seventeen thousand in all," said the banker.

"Well," said Billy, "suppose we make it twenty thousand as a lump sum; or, rather, as you wish twenty-four hours, I think, as time is valuable in a case like this, a thousand an hour would not be exorbitant. If you say twenty-four thousand in gold, it's a go."

"That is a large amount," said the banker.

"Oh, very well, then," replied Billy. "We have only to do our duty. You are not absent; you are here. The amount is large, as you say, but you must remember that the risk is tremendous."

"I agree to the twenty-four thousand dollars," said the banker hastily. "Can you make sure of your men—of their silence?"

"Reasonably sure," answered Billy. "The only question is, can we have the money in cash, here and now?"

"I am not sure that I can give you all that amount, but I think I can." He consulted a pocket-book he had with him and added some figures together. "Yes," he said, "I can do it."

Billy called his pals, and together they accompanied the banker to another room that contained a large safe, which Slider opened. He took out several bags, and taking down a pair of scales from the top of the safe, said:

"You may weigh this, and you will find it correct. There are five bags here and they each contain five thousand dollars in gold."

"Open all the bags," said Billy cautiously. The banker did so, and Billy ran a handful of gold from each of them through his fingers and found everything correct.

"How much does a thousand weigh?" he asked the banker, and on receiving his answer, placed one of the bags on the scales.

"It is a pity to break bulk," said Billy. "I think we'll call it twenty-five thousand."

"Very well," answered the banker. "Suppose you call your men in. I wish to be sure that you will keep your part of the compact."

The four men were speedily inside the room, and their eyes opened as they saw the glitter of gold. The fake inspector briefly detailed to them the points of the bargain, while the banker looked from man to man and listened anxiously.

"You agree to this?" said Billy, and each of the men nodded.

"You will have no further trouble from us, Mr. Slider," said Billy Haven politely, "at least, for twenty-four hours."

The banker drew a deep breath of relief as each man took a bag of gold and quietly departed.

A few days after the papers were filled with the startling announcement that Mr. Slider, the well-known banker, had absconded and that an enormous amount of money was missing. Investigation of the books showed that he had been preparing for flight for over a year, and rumor has it that he is now living somewhere in South America. But that is one of the things about which nobody knows anything definite.

# Current News

## STATUE OF HEROD THE GREAT

Excavations conducted by the British School of Archaeology have uncovered and identified the cloister around the famed court of Herod the Great, the magnificence of which was described by Josephus. These ruins of Ascalon reveal statues of the gods, and a gigantic statue of Herod the Great himself has just been found there.

## CLOCK THAT IS A PUZZLE

There is a strange clock at Beaver, Pa. Whenever the mercury goes down to zero the old town clock begins striking and continues to do so until some one climbs the tower and muffles the bell. This has been the case as long as the oldest inhabitant can remember. Expert clockmakers have been called in to investigate it from time to time, but so far none of them has been able to solve the mystery.

## HUMAN BONES FOUND, 50,000 YEARS OLD

Bones sufficient in number to form several skeletons and estimated to be at least 50,000 years old have been discovered by a group of American research workers, headed by Prof. Georie Grant McCurdy of Yale Museum, who have been investigating the cliffs not far from Angouleme for several months.

During the winter these will be classified and distributed among Yale and other American museums, although valuable specimens will be kept at the La Quina Museum, established by Dr. Henri Martin, owner of the properties on which the excavations have been made.

Hundreds of bones of animals of the same period also have been uncovered, most of which bear the marks of flint spears and scrapers, which were found in abundance throughout the region, thus classifying the relics as belonging to the middle stone age.

## SMALL BOY'S GREAT WEIGHT

Leslie Drake, eleven years of age, a son of Mr. and Mrs. Anderson Drake, of Fairland, Shelby County, Ind., is believed to weigh more than any other boy in Indiana of his age. The youngster, who is five feet tall, weighs 245 pounds.

## SILT IS FAILURE AS FUEL

Tests conducted in the modern boiler plant of the big Ashmore shops and engine terminals of the Lehigh Valley Railroad have demonstrated to officials that anthracite silt cannot be used as fuel. Forced draught and mechanical stoking failed to run the heat up to a point where steam could be carried and the railroad has ordered buckwheat coal used again.

Vast quantities of the silt, washed from the coal in the breakers, exist in this part of the State, and, as it is almost all pure carbon, it has been thought it might be adaptable to the needs of the railroad plant. The dust chokes up the fire boxes and merely smolders instead of burning.

## VACCINATING SUGAR CANE

The vaccination or inoculation of plants in the bitterly waged fight against their diseases will appeal as a novel idea to many who have always thought of the method in connection with the prevention of human and animal maladies only. A measure of success has attended its use by the Office of Foreign Seed and Plant Introduction, Washington, D. C., reports Popular Mechanics, in the evolution of a variety of sugar cane which will be immune to the commoner forms of disease peculiar to the plant, and especially the so-called mosaic disease, which has recently made its appearance on the sugar plantations. Seedlings from the inoculated specimens will be tested for immunity, and if the experiment is the success it is hoped it will be, it is thought that a practically disease-proof variety of plant will be evolved.

## A STAR LARGER THAN BETELGEUSE

The enormous size of Betelgeuse, as revealed by interferometer measurements at Mount Wilson, was a topic of widespread popular interest a few months ago. News now comes from the same observatory that Antares, the well-known first-magnitude star in the Scorpion, is probably even bigger. Its angular diameter, as measured with the interferometer, comes out 0.039 second, thus greatly exceeding Russell's predicted value of 0.028 second. There is some question as to the parallax. If it is assumed that Antares belongs to the Scorpion group, the resulting value of the parallax is 0.0085 second, and the diameter 430,000,000 miles. If, however, we give the same weight to this value and to the mean of the measured parallaxes, we find 0.013 second, and a diameter of 280,000,000 miles. Either value is greater than that obtained for Betelgeuse; viz., 218,000,000 miles.

## DEATH-DEALING INSECT SOUGHT BY PHYSICIANS

Physicians throughout western Pennsylvania are making an effort to locate a certain kind of insect which is believed to have caused the death of a woman in Indiana and the serious illness of a man of Sigel, Jefferson county. Victims of this insect are unable to give any definite description of it, merely describing it as a small flying bug.

Mrs. James S. Hileman of Indiana died two days after being stung on the lower lip. Shortly after the insect attacked her the lip began to swell and within twenty-four hours she was critically ill, and the best of medical skill obtainable was unable to save her life.

Thomas Callen of Sigel, being treated for blood poisoning, states that the insect stung him two weeks ago. The sting was on the right arm and the victim suffered much pain. His physicians say he will recover.

## HONEY-MAKING ANTS

The honey-making ant may belong to any of several species that are found in Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico and Mexico. Like other ants, they live in colonies in subterranean nests, the entrance to which is in a small raised mound. The honey is obtained at night from small galls on oak leaves by foraging workers which become considerably distended with honey. With the honey they feed the other workers and the young in the hills, and what is left over is communicated to a number of ants which simply serve as living receptacles. These live honey bags cling to the roof of the nest chamber and move very little, and in time their abdomens become greatly distended. According to McCook, the naturalist, and the author of the "Honey Ants of the Garden of the Gods," these living storehouses merely retain the honey until it is needed by the colony for the winter, when it gives out the surcharged crops to feed the colony. Ants with similar habits, but of different benera, have been described in South Africa. In Mexico these ants are eaten by the natives.

## SHOES ARE LUXURIES IN MEXICO

Shoes and stockings are luxuries for the greater number of Mexicans, writes S. L. Apator in the Cleveland *Plain Dealer*. The only wearing apparel some of them possess are trousers and shirt or skirt and waist of cotton and a large home-made straw hat. As a waterproof in the rainy season some use a kind of mantle of palm leaves, retailing at 75 cents, but not every one can afford to buy even this and many walk or rather run under the heavy rain in their cotton shirts. They cannot use street cars because they haven't 5 cents for fare.

The so-called better class of the laboring people has risen to a higher standard of living, but not all of them can afford to buy things considered of prime necessity in more advanced countries. Only mechanics, machinists, railroad conductors, engineers, printers and the like, belonging to some labor unions, get about the same wages as in the United States. They are, however, in the minority. Clerks, stenographers, bookkeepers, cashiers, etc., who are in the majority, get very small salaries, from $20 to $80 a month. Letter carriers and some other postoffice workers are paid less than $1 a day.

The low wages are greatly due to the inefficiency of the average employee—particularly common labor.

## GREAT COPPER MINE DISCOVERED BY PIG

Most copper mines have been found through pure luck. The Calumet lode, the greatest of them all, was discovered by a pig.

One day while vigorously stirring the soil of the backyard of its owner, who kept a boarding house, the pig uncovered a prehistoric Indian cache.

This was a pile of buried copper which was worth a fortune in itself. But it also led to the examination of the rock beneath, in which veins of the metal were found.

The Indians used copper before the days of Columbus, principally for making ornaments. Ancient Indian skeletons have been found wearing copper masks. The aborigines, however, had difficulty in working the metal through the want of efficient toils.

In Michigan they built fires against the rocks containing the copper. This sometimes produced huge nuggets, or "mass copper," which the Indians could neither divide nor carry away.

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## MOSQUITO NETS USED BY ANCIENTS

Mosquito nets are by no means a modern invention. In an article in the *Lancet* (London), Sir Patrick Hehir, a physician and retired Major General, who has traveled about India lecturing to the people on malaria, quotes Herodotus, writing of the Egyptians who dwelt on the banks of lakes, rivers and marshes, he says:

"Every man has a net with which in the day he takes fish and at night uses in the following manner: In whatever bed he sleeps he throws the net around it, and then, getting in, sleeps under it. If he should wrap himself up in his clothes or in linen the mosquitoes would bite through them, but they never bite through the net."

The Romans called the mosquito net a conopeum. It is spoken of by Varro, Horace, Juvenal, Propertius and Paulus Silentarius. Horace and Propertius referred to it in a way that implies they thought it unmanly for a hardy Roman soldier to indulge in such protection.

## TEMPLE IN INDIA MARKS EARTH'S CENTRE

The idea that the earth is not a flat disk, but a globe, does not seem to have "caught on" in India, for they still talk about a certain place being the "centre of the world."

In Delhi stands a lofty monument that goes by the name of Kutub Minor, a structure towering high above the temple of which it is a part.

The appearance of this curious piece of architecture is that of a number of tiers of columns, seemingly tied together in bundles. At big intervals there are balconies.

The Kutub Minor is of especial interest and note in the world over which the religion of the teacher Buddha holds sway. Here, long ago, tradition has it, a meteor fell, sent by the ruling powers in the mystic world beyond this life, to mark the exact centre of the world.

In commemoration of this miraculous event the Kutub Minor was erected on the spot, that mankind might never forget it.

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## NEW YORK CITY GREATER THAN "GREATER LONDON"

New York has a valid claim against London for classification as the largest city in the world, according to the National Geographic Society. Discussing the recent announcement of the British census that "Greater London" has now a population of 7,476,168 persons, a society bulletin has questioned the right of London city proper to claim all that population, and suggested that New York's 5,620,048 souls, actually within one municipal unit, under one municipal government, may make it the largest.

"Legally, as a municipal unit, 'London' refers only to the area within the boundaries of the county of London," the bulletin asserted. "Only 'Greater London' figures are carried in the despatches, but at the rate of growth they indicate London proper still is under the 5,000,000 mark. The 'Greater London' which has nearly 7,500,000 people has an existence as a metropolitan and police unit. Its population is distributed over 693 square miles, an area six times that of municipal London, and more than twice that of municipal New York."

# Mystery Magazine

The feature stories already published in this magazine are worth reading. The following are the titles of the novelettes contained in the numbers already printed.

1 "The Eel Man," by Robert Carlton Brown.
2 "Zitana of Maison Rouge," by F. W. Doughty.
3 "The Mysterious Web," by Armstrong Perry.
4 "Under the Hypnotic Spell," by Dr. H. Enton.
5 "The Silken Sheath," by Crittenden Marriott.
6 "A Fortune Teller's Secret," by Gladys Hall.
7 "The Mystic Emblem," by Marie Coolidge Rask.
8 "The Cards of Fate," by William Goode.
9 "Mr. Bachellor's Apartments," by W. H. Osborne.
10 "The Inner Wheel," by Octavius Roy Cohen.
11 "The Voice of the Valley," by Robt. C. Brown.
12 "The Sign of the Seven Sharks," by Chas. F. Oursler.
13. "Under a Mask," by Crittenden Marriott.
14 "Case 4,444," by Gladys Hall.
15 "After a Million," by Police Captain Howard.
16 "Shadowing the Blue Triangle," by Chas. F. Oursler.
17 "The Case of Captain Fortesque," by Redfield Ingalls.
18 "The Bird-Headed Sphinx," by Edith S. Tupper.
19 "The Double Mystery," by Dr. Harry Enton.
20 "The Magician Detective," by C. F. Oursler.
21 "King Cobra Mystery," by George Gilbert.
22 "The Haunted Corridors," by Wm. H. Osborne.
23 "No Man's Man," by Maxwell Smith.
24 "The Trevor Puzzle," by T. C. Harbaugh.
25 "The Trail of Roses," by Edmund Condon.
26 "The Hindoo Vanishing Clue," by Pauline C. Bouve.
27 "Who Was Guilty?" by Beulah Poynter.
28 "The Evil Eye," by Chas. F. Oursler.
29. "The Thirteenth Door," by Edith Sessions Tupper.
30 "The Game of Detective Carew," by L. Jerome.
31 "Law-maker and Law-breaker," by Beulah Poynter.
32 "The Counterfeit Heiress," by Inspector J. Harrigan.
33 "Tracked to China," by Chief Roger O'Brien.
34 "After the German Spies," by May Halsey Miller.
35 "The Clue in the Box," by Alexander Douglas.
36 "Trained by a French Detective," by Rene Renaud.
37 "A Drop of Ink," by Lieutenant Robt. W. Warden.
38 "The Ten Doctors," by Allan Arnold Fox.
39 "The Stain on Page 61," by Chas. T. Jordan.
40 "A Masked Mystery," by Police Sergeant Kelly.
41 "The Black Soul," by Beulah Poynter.
42 "The Sanctuary," by William Hamilton Osborne.
43 "The Mystery of the Seven Shadows," by C. F. Oursler.
44 "The Sign on the Dragon," by C. Martin Eddy, Jr.
45 "The Magic of Detective Woo Fang," by Frank F. Whitfield.
46 "The Decoy," by William Hamilton Osborne.
47 "The House With 30 Steps," by Ralph D. Porter.
48 "When the Clock Struck 13," by Dr. Harry Enton.
49 "A Piece of Blotting Paper," by Dorothy Weber.
50 "The $200,000 Mystery," by Ethel Rosemon.
51 "The Case of Dr. Brice," by Mary R. P. Hatch.
52 "The Phantom Motor," by Laura Reid Montgomery.
53 "The Blackjack," by William Hamilton Osborne.
54 "The Whispering Head," by Chas. F. Oursler.
55 "The Inspector's Strange Case," by B. Poynter.
56 "The Secret of the Sealed Book," by Ethel Rosemon.
57 "The Clue of Steel," by Willis Lathrop.
58 "Alias Louis Vardon," by William H. Osborne.
59 "Mystery of the Old-Time Club," by C. Bingold.
60 "Caught With the Evidence," by Ethel Rosemon.
61 "A Little Gold Spider," by Cecil Burleigh.
62 "The Velvet Touch," by Julian Darrow.
63 "The Clue of the Red Lamp," by Chas. F. Oursler.
64 "The Scheme of Solomon Snare," by W. H. Osborne.
65 "Quicker Than the Eye," by Ralph Cummins.
66 "The Clue of the Dark Room," by Hamilton Craigie.
67 "The Tongue of Osiris," by Marc Edmund Jones.
68 "Detective Wade's Big Case," by Ethel Rosemon.
69 "The Spirit Bell," by Chas. Fulton Oursler.
70 "The House Behind the Wall," by Julian Darrow.
71 "The Admiral's Spoons," by Wm. H. Osborne.
72 "The Canine Clue," by Thos. J. Lally.
73 "The Psychic Enemy," by Arthur Wm. Andreen.
74 "The Wonder Girl," by Ralph Cummins.
75 "On the Wrong Trail," by Ethel Rosemon.
76 "The Spirit Witness," by Chas. Fulton Oursler.
77 "On the Wrong Trail," by Ethel Rosemon.
78 "The Stolen Year," by Edmund Elliot.
79 "The Affair at Hollywood House," by Wm. Kofoed.
80 "A Keyless Mystery," by Hamilton Craigie.
81 "Professor Satan," by Charles Fulton Oursler.
82 "Who Killed McNally?" by Beulah Poynter.
83 "The Clue of the Whorl," by Katherine Stagg.
84 "The 'Czar' and the Ring," by Edmund Elliot.
85 "A Clue of Flame," by Jack Bechdolt.
86 "The Face in the Crowd," by Marc Edmund Jones.
87 "The Man in Room No. 7," by Chas. F. Oursler.
88 "Four Ten-Dollar Bills," by Henry G. Howland.
89. "A Challenge to Power," by Dr. Harry Enton.
90 "The House Next-Door," by Police Captain Howard.
91 "The Trance Detective," by Chas. Fulton Oursler.
92 "Friday at Twelve," by Katherine Stagg.
93 "By the Left Hand," by Hamilton Craigie.
94 "The Melody of Death," by Jack Bechdolt.
95 "The Trick of the Great Yen How," by William Hamilton Osborne.
96 "At Moriarity's," by Fred S. Shuey.
97 "The Last Star of the Films," by Jack Bechdolt.

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## GRASSHOPPERS IN ICE

Standing in Daisy Pass the traveler is at the threshold of some of the most interesting wonderlands of the Beartooth, writes A. H. Carhart in the American Forestry Magazine in an article on "The Land of the Beartooth." Perhaps the most curious glacier in the world is found here. Indeed it can claim distinction on its unique feature which would make it an unusual scenic value among many glaciers.

It is the Grasshopper Glacier and in its ice it carries thousands of grasshoppers preserved in freezing condition for many years.

It is believed that centuries ago, before white men came to this continent, a vast horde of these insects were flying over the mountains at a high altitude when they encountered a severe cold air current.

The low temperature killed the grasshoppers or drove them to an alighting place and they were caught in the ice and snow of the glacier. The glacier with three smaller ones lies in a huge semicircle extending from the north and east edge of Sawtooth Peak to Granite Peak, making a continuous stretch of ice-over three miles in length.

## AGED WOMAN'S DREAM

Mrs. Jane Dupree Glenn, of Mound City, Mo., 104 years of age, dreams of her old home in Ohio as she sits in her chair knitting to pass away idle moments.

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Mrs. Glenn crossed the ocean when she was two years old and that was just 102 years ago. Shortly after arriving in New York City she was taken by her parents on their journey in an ox-cart to Chillicothe, O., where the family first settled.

The trip across the Atlantic Ocean was made in an old-time sailing vessel that was eight weeks on the way. Now Mrs. Glenn hears of the proposal of birdmen to make that same trip through the air in one day. Chillicothe at the time the Glenns settled there was a frontier town and just a short time before their arrival an Indian village. This was in 1819.

A few years later the family moved to Gallia County, O., and the girl was married there to John H. Glenn Jan. 1, 1839. Mrs. Glenn was a native of the Isle of Jersey, located in the English Channel.


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## WORLD'S HIGHEST PEAK

Somewhere in the tangled maze of the southern Himalayan mountains three parties of British engineers are working their way through unexplored gorges and passes toward the base of Mount Everest. They are blazing the way for the expedition that will later this summer attempt to scale the granite walls of Everest and conquer the highest mountain peak on the globe.

The first party to leave here, commanded by Maj. Morshead, proceeded up the Teesta Valley and over what is known as the Kangrila route. The other two units, commanded by Col. Bury, intend to meet the Morshead party at Khamba Jong, and then the combined expedition will strike westward toward the village of Tengri Jong, about 30 miles north of the Everest group. From thence will start the party which will try to reach the summit of the dominating peak of the range.

Before the actual work of scaling the stupendous slopes of Everest can begin, however, engineers must carefully survey all approaches to the mountain and try to find the most practicable route to the top.

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